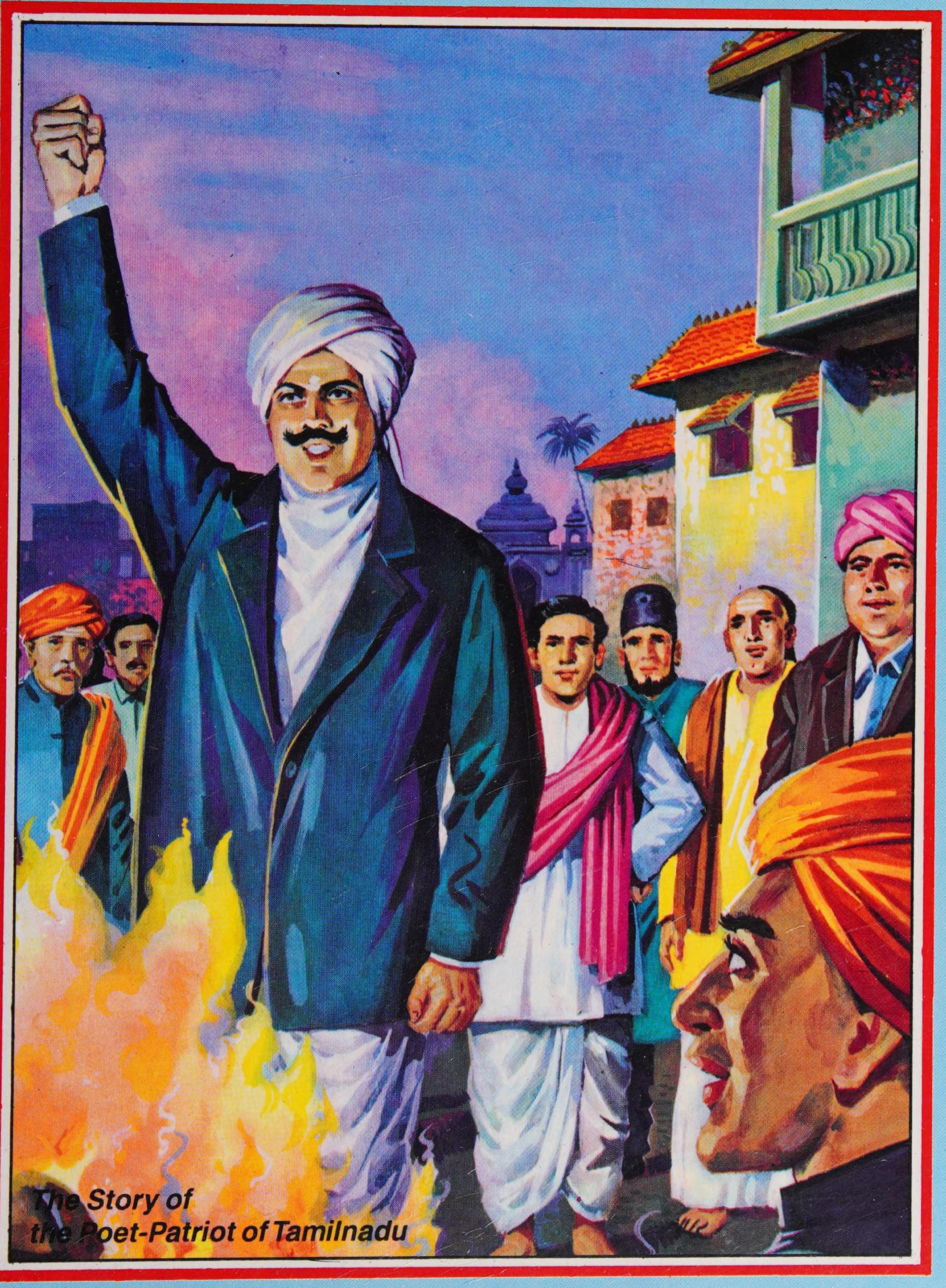
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Subramania Bharati

Vol. 708 Rs 25



The Story of
the Poet-Patriot of Tamilnadu

IBH

Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Subramania Bharati

Subramania Bharati loved children, and wrote poems and songs for them. He loved the koel and the sparrow. Even the crow. He once embraced the lowly donkey. To him all birds and animals were like brothers. To him the Brahmin and the untouchable were alike. He looked upon all mankind as one family.

He loved India with all his heart and suffered because he was a patriot. He was the poet of freedom and he wrote poetry that was like fire. He wrote prose, too, which everyone understood.

Bharati wanted women to be free. He wanted prosperity for all. He said that if a single Indian starved we would shake the whole world. He was not an orthodox man and spoke against caste. But he was proud of India's religious and cultural heritage.

Bharati died when he was only 39. But in a short life he did much, said much, wrote much. He was one of the great Tamil poets. He was one of the great Indian poets.

We are grateful to Shri N. Majumdar for providing pictorial references and offering valuable suggestions.

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Artworks : Dilip Kadam

AMAR CHITRA KATHA
AMAR CHITRA KATHA:
The Route to Your Roots
Over 80 million copies have been sold so far

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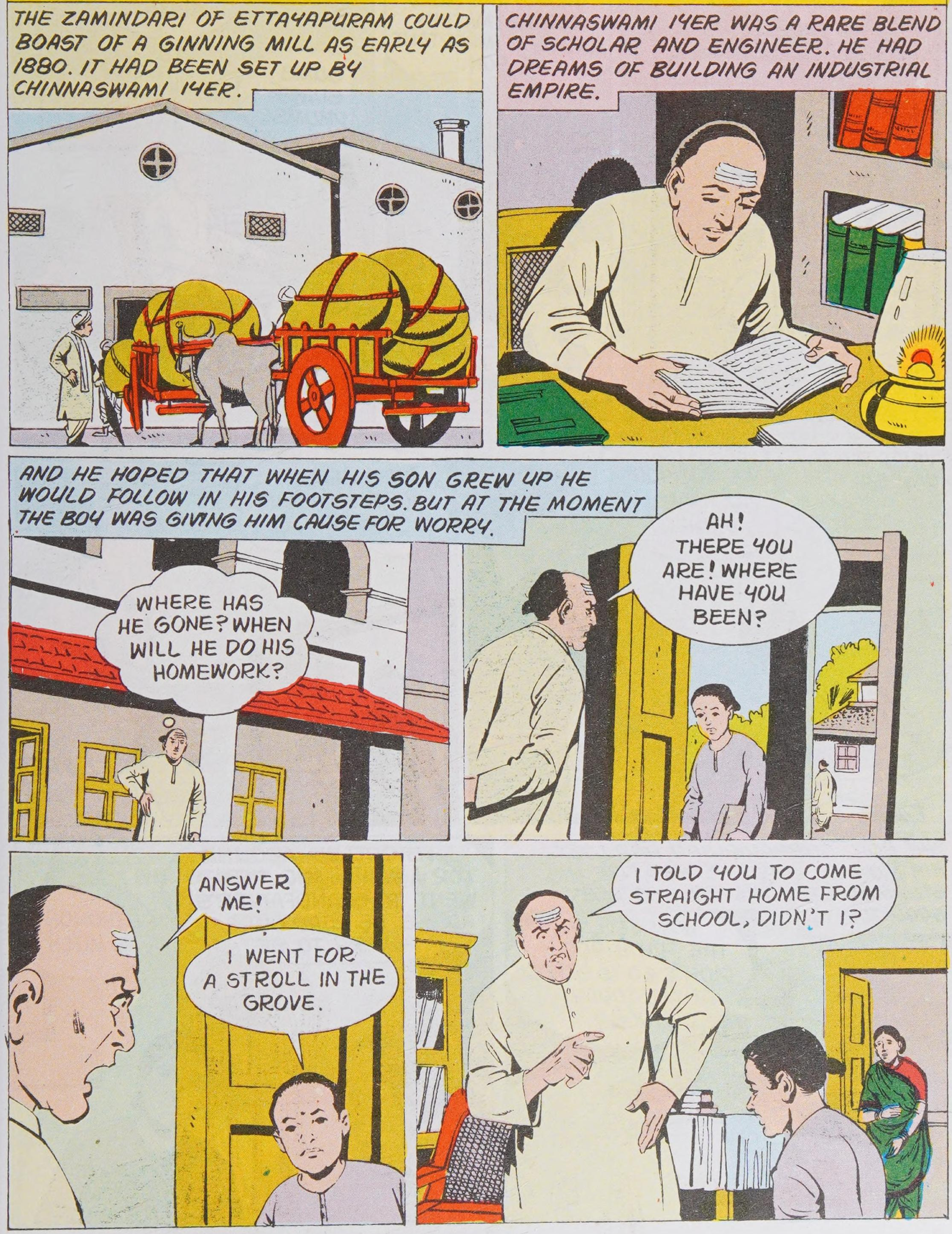
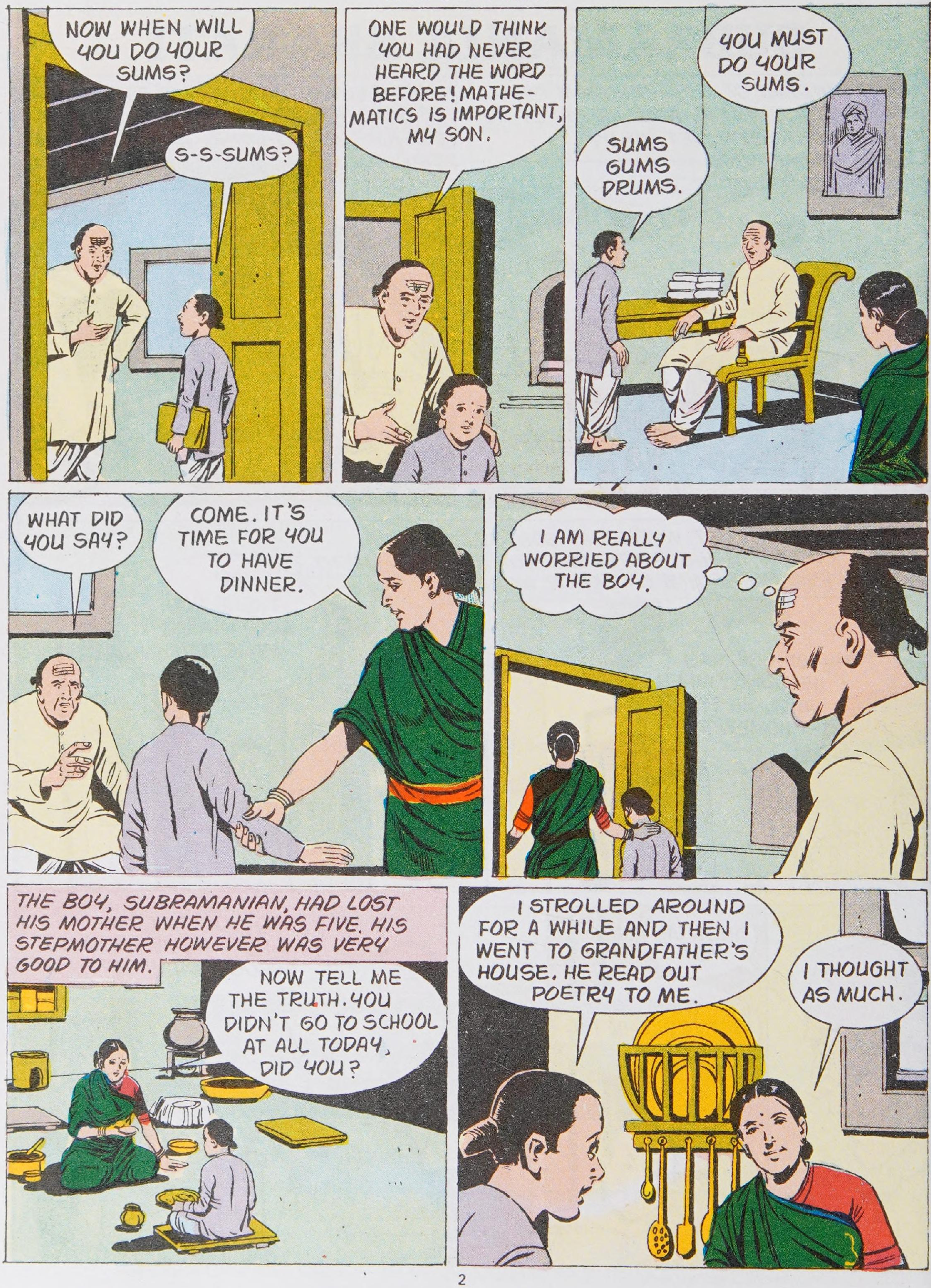
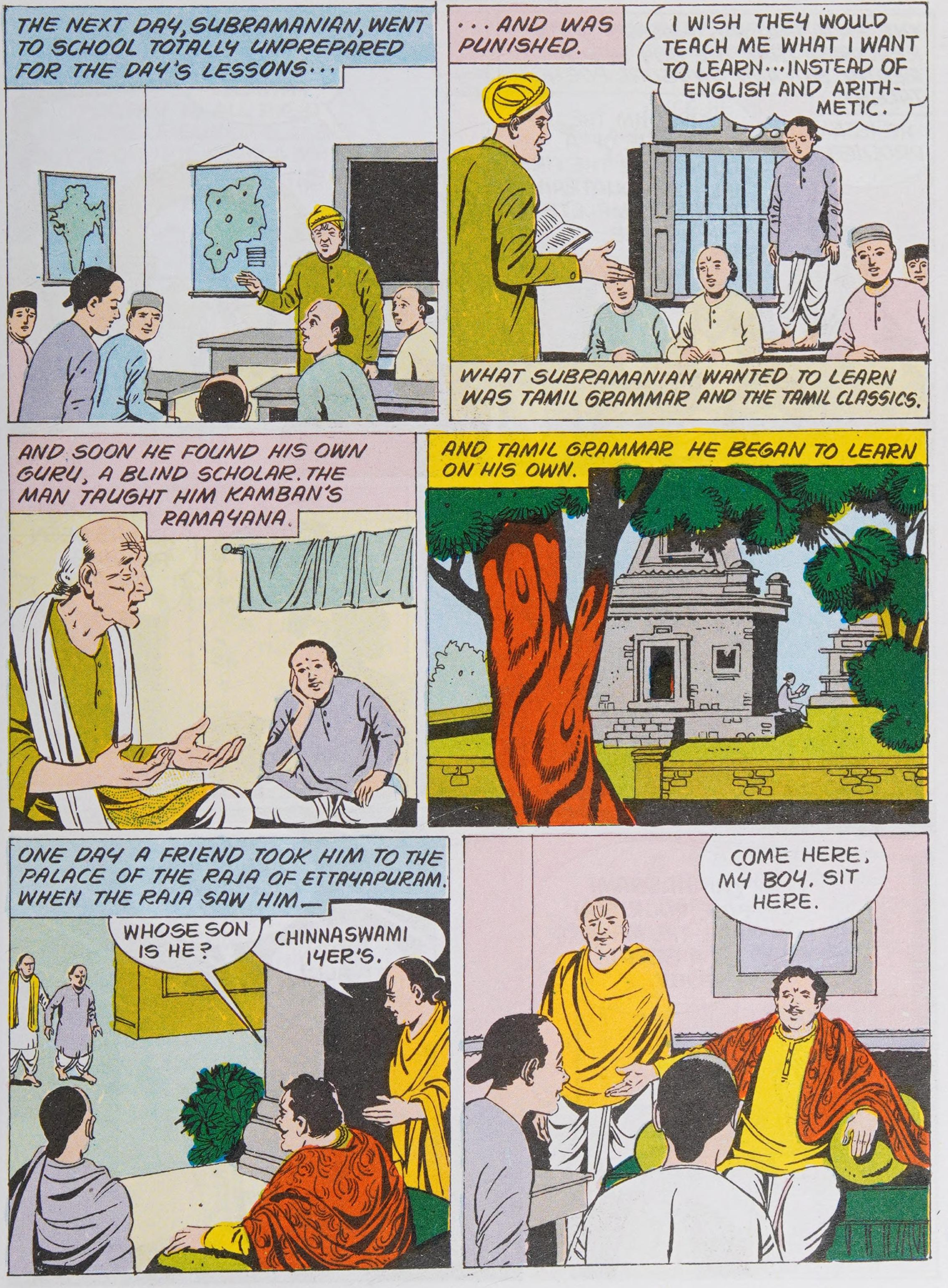
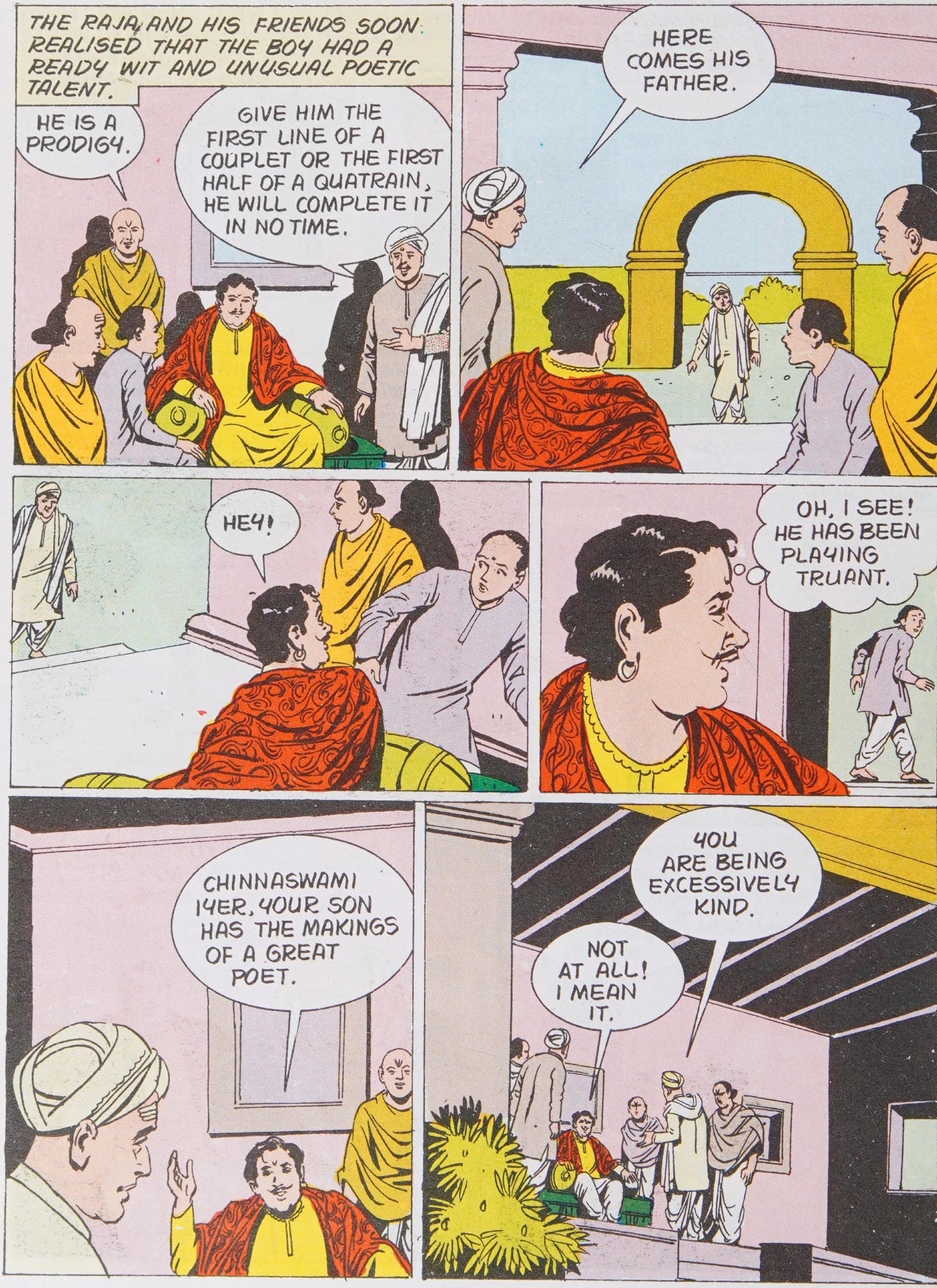
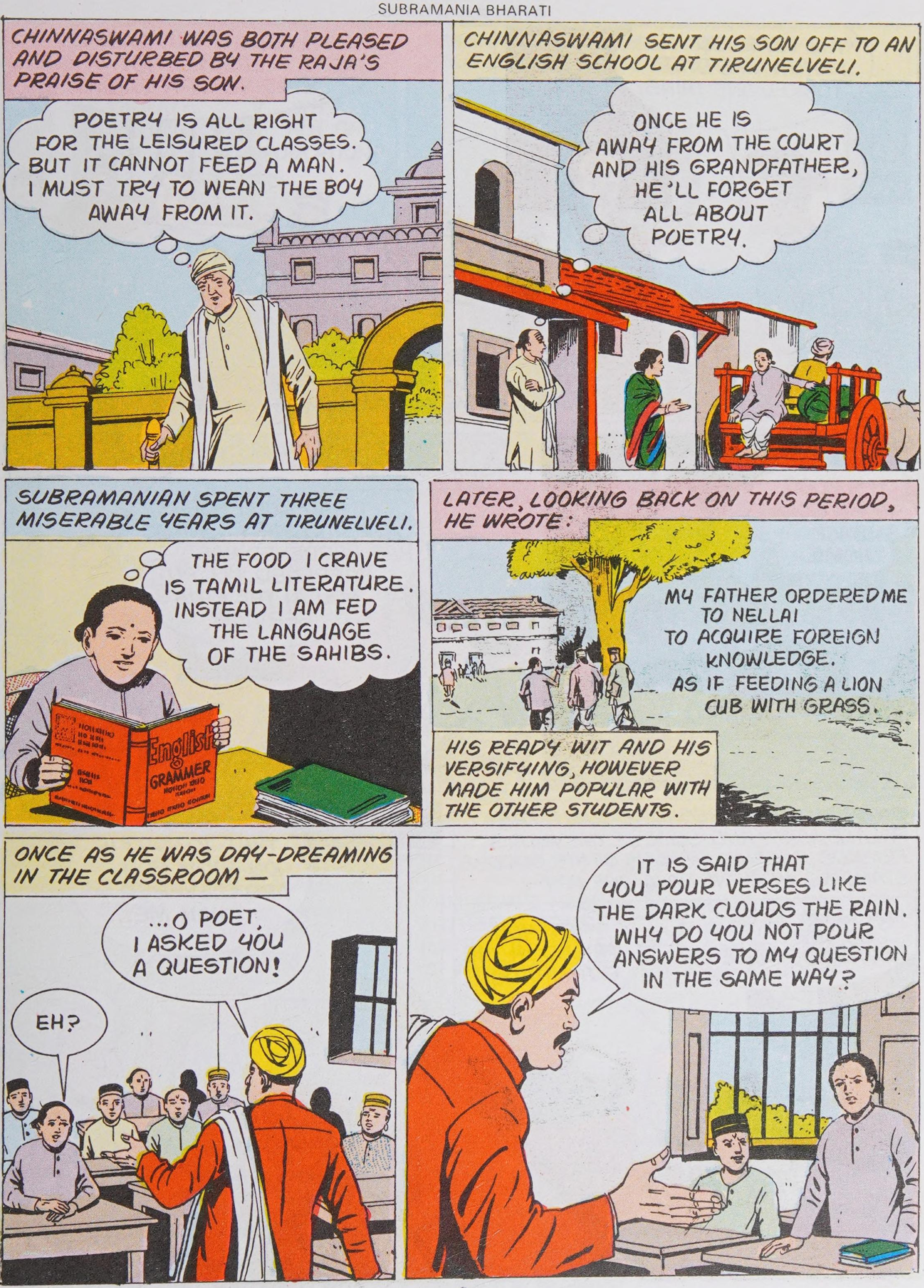
SUBRAMANIA BHARATI

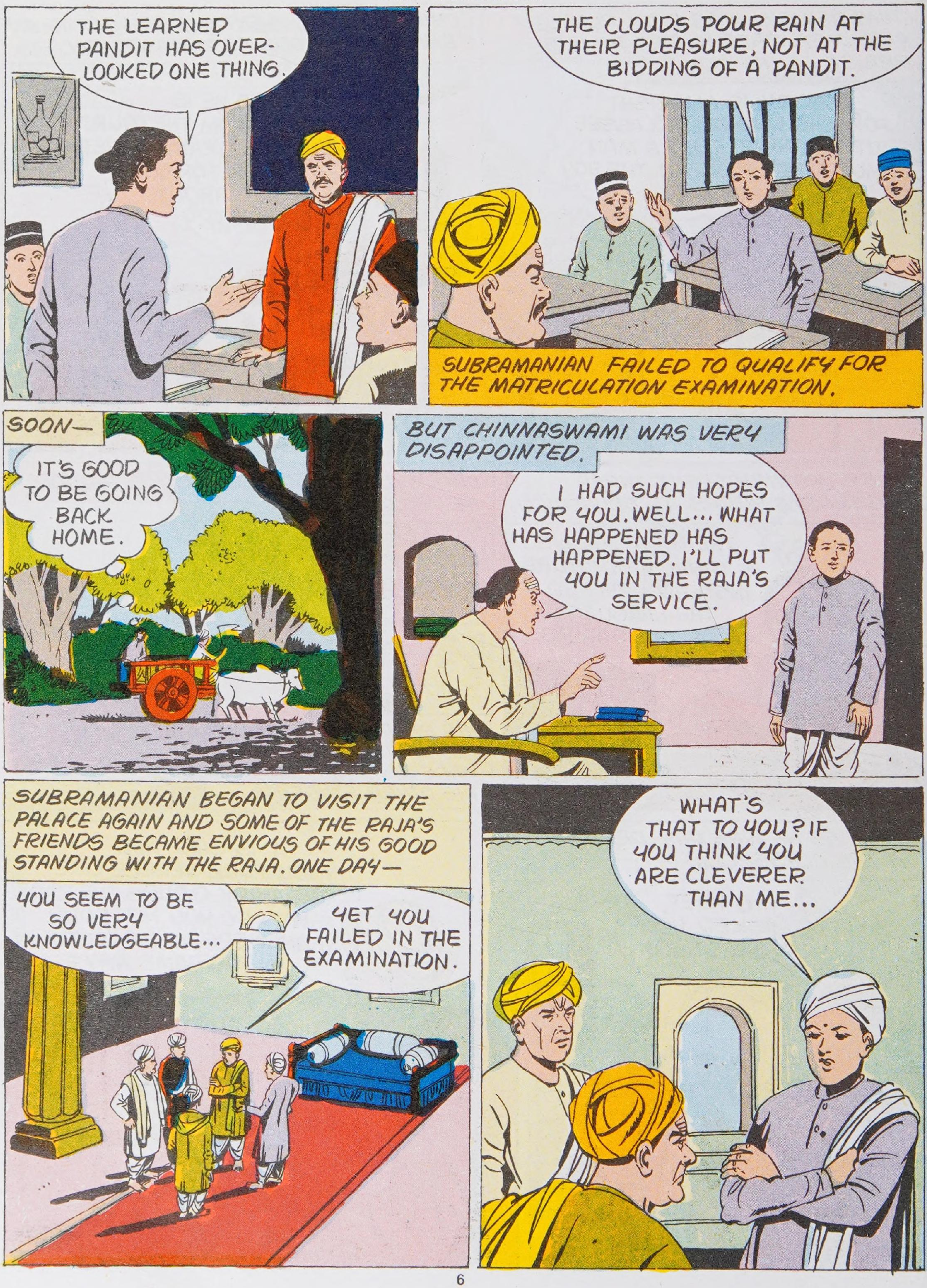

THE ZAMINDARI OF ETTAYAPURAM COULD BOAST OF A GINNING MILL AS EARLY AS 1880. IT HAD BEEN SET UP BY CHINNASWAMI IYER.
CHINNASWAMI IYER WAS A RARE BLEND OF SCHOLAR AND ENGINEER. HE HAD DREAMS OF BUILDING AN INDUSTRIAL EMPIRE.
AND HE HOPED THAT WHEN HIS SON GREW UP HE WOULD FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS. BUT AT THE MOMENT THE BOY WAS GIVING HIM CAUSE FOR WORRY.
WHERE HAS HE GONE? WHEN WILL HE DO HIS HOMEWORK?
AH! THERE YOU ARE! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
ANSWER ME!
I WENT FOR A STROLL IN THE GROVE.
I TOLD YOU TO COME STRAIGHT HOME FROM SCHOOL, DIDN'T I?

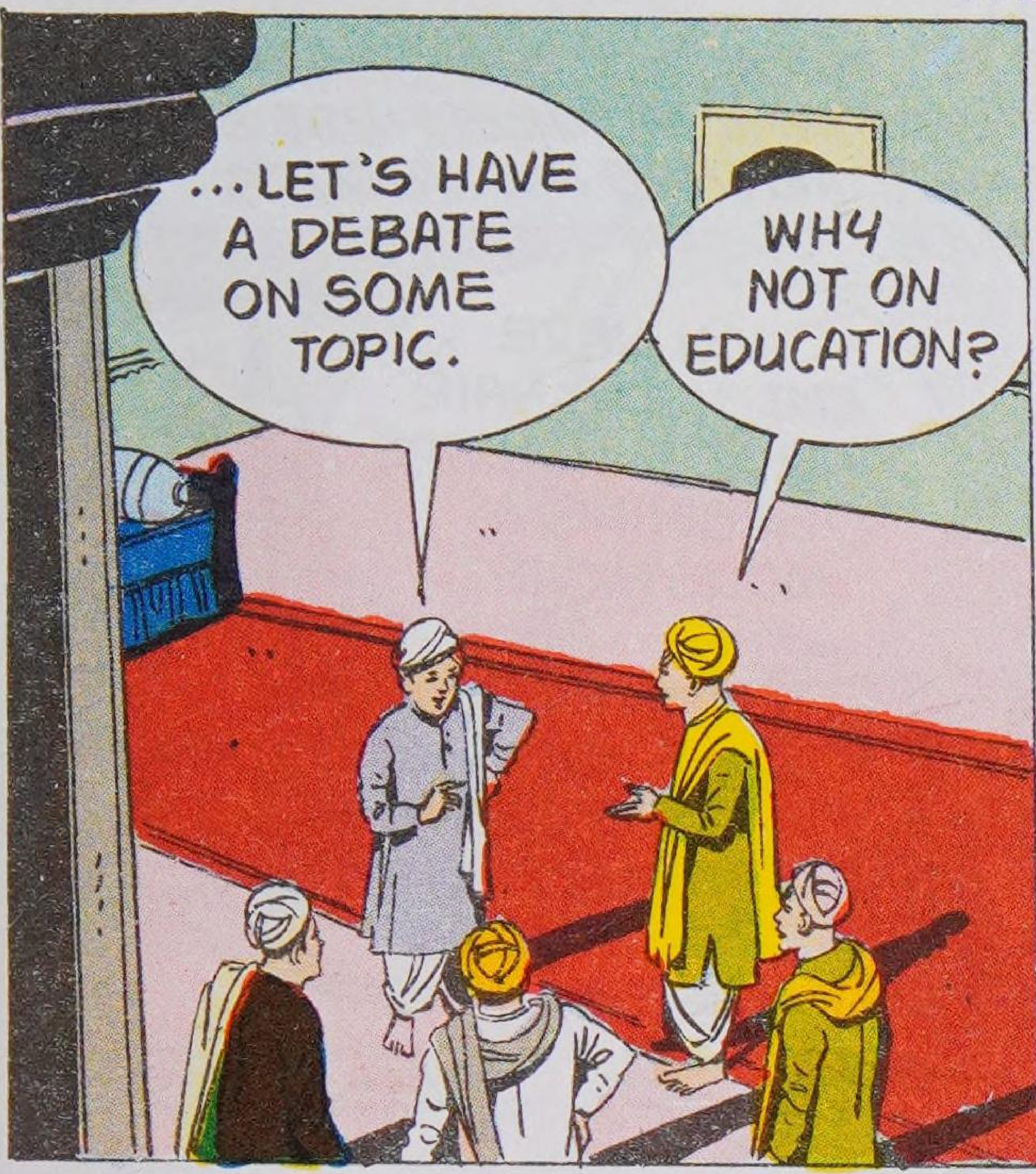

NOW WHEN WILL YOU DO YOUR SUMS?
S-S-SUMS?
ONE WOULD THINK YOU HAD NEVER HEARD THE WORD BEFORE! MATHEMATICS IS IMPORTANT, MY SON.
YOU MUST DO YOUR SUMS.
SUMS GUMS DRUMS.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
COME. IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO HAVE DINNER.
I AM REALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE BOY.
THE BOY, SUBRAMANIAN, HAD LOST HIS MOTHER WHEN HE WAS FIVE. HIS STEPMOTHER HOWEVER WAS VERY GOOD TO HIM.
NOW TELL ME THE TRUTH. YOU DIDN'T GO TO SCHOOL AT ALL TODAY, DID YOU?
...
...
I STROLLED AROUND FOR A WHILE AND THEN I WENT TO GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE. HE READ OUT POETRY TO ME.
I THOUGHT AS MUCH.


THE NEXT DAY, SUBRAMANIAN, WENT TO SCHOOL TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR THE DAY'S LESSONS...
...AND WAS PUNISHED.
I WISH THEY WOULD TEACH ME WHAT I WANT TO LEARN...INSTEAD OF ENGLISH AND ARITHMETIC.
WHAT SUBRAMANIAN WANTED TO LEARN WAS TAMIL GRAMMAR AND THE TAMIL CLASSICS.
AND SOON HE FOUND HIS OWN GURU, A BLIND SCHOLAR. THE MAN TAUGHT HIM KAMBAN'S RAMAYANA.
AND TAMIL GRAMMAR HE BEGAN TO LEARN ON HIS OWN.
ONE DAY A FRIEND TOOK HIM TO THE PALACE OF THE RAJA OF ETTAYAPURAM. WHEN THE RAJA SAW HIM—
WHOSE SON IS HE?
CHINNASWAMI IYER'S.
COME HERE, MY BOY. SIT HERE.

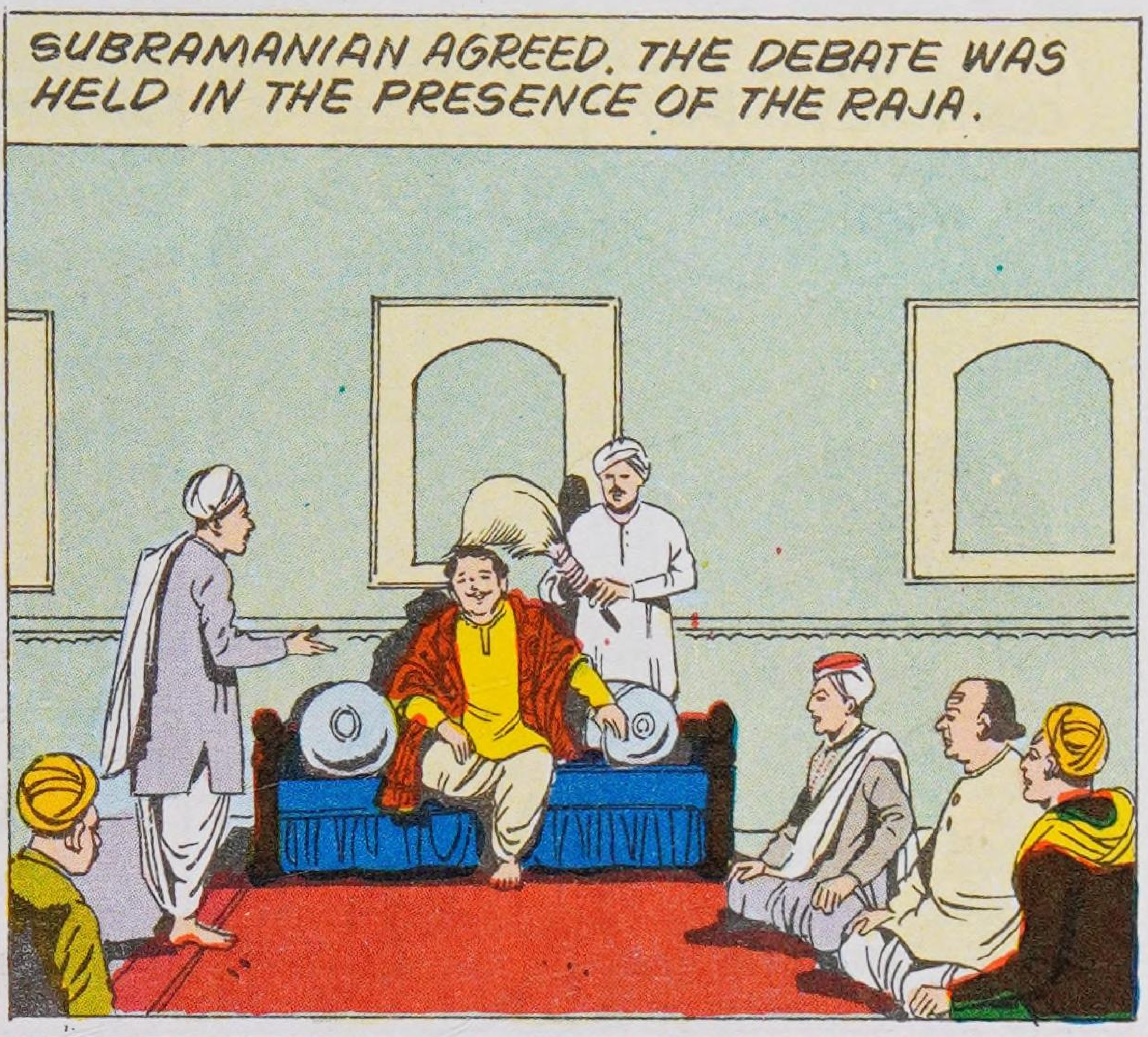

THE RAJA AND HIS FRIENDS SOON REALISED THAT THE BOY HAD A READY WIT AND UNUSUAL POETIC TALENT.
HE IS A PRODIGY.
GIVE HIM THE FIRST LINE OF A COUPLET OR THE FIRST HALF OF A QUATRAIN, HE WILL COMPLETE IT IN NO TIME.
HERE COMES HIS FATHER.
HEY!
OH, I SEE! HE HAS BEEN PLAYING TRUANT.
CHINNASWAMI IYER, YOUR SON HAS THE MAKINGS OF A GREAT POET.
YOU ARE BEING EXCESSIVELY KIND.
NOT AT ALL! I MEAN IT.


CHINNASWAMI WAS BOTH PLEASED AND DISTURBED BY THE RAJA'S PRAISE OF HIS SON.
POETRY IS ALL RIGHT FOR THE LEISURED CLASSES. BUT IT CANNOT FEED A MAN. I MUST TRY TO WEAN THE BOY AWAY FROM IT.
CHINNASWAMI SENT HIS SON OFF TO AN ENGLISH SCHOOL AT TIRUNELVELI.
ONCE HE IS AWAY FROM THE COURT AND HIS GRANDFATHER, HE'LL FORGET ALL ABOUT POETRY.
SUBRAMANIAN SPENT THREE MISERABLE YEARS AT TIRUNELVELI.
THE FOOD I CRAVE IS TAMIL LITERATURE. INSTEAD I AM FED THE LANGUAGE OF THE SAHIBS.
English GRAMMER
LATER, LOOKING BACK ON THIS PERIOD, HE WROTE:
MY FATHER ORDERED ME TO NELLAI TO ACQUIRE FOREIGN KNOWLEDGE. AS IF FEEDING A LION CUB WITH GRASS.
HIS READY WIT AND HIS VERSIFYING, HOWEVER MADE HIM POPULAR WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS.
ONCE AS HE WAS DAY-DREAMING IN THE CLASSROOM —
...O POET, I ASKED YOU A QUESTION!
EH?
IT IS SAID THAT YOU POUR VERSES LIKE THE DARK CLOUDS THE RAIN. WHY DO YOU NOT POUR ANSWERS TO MY QUESTION IN THE SAME WAY?

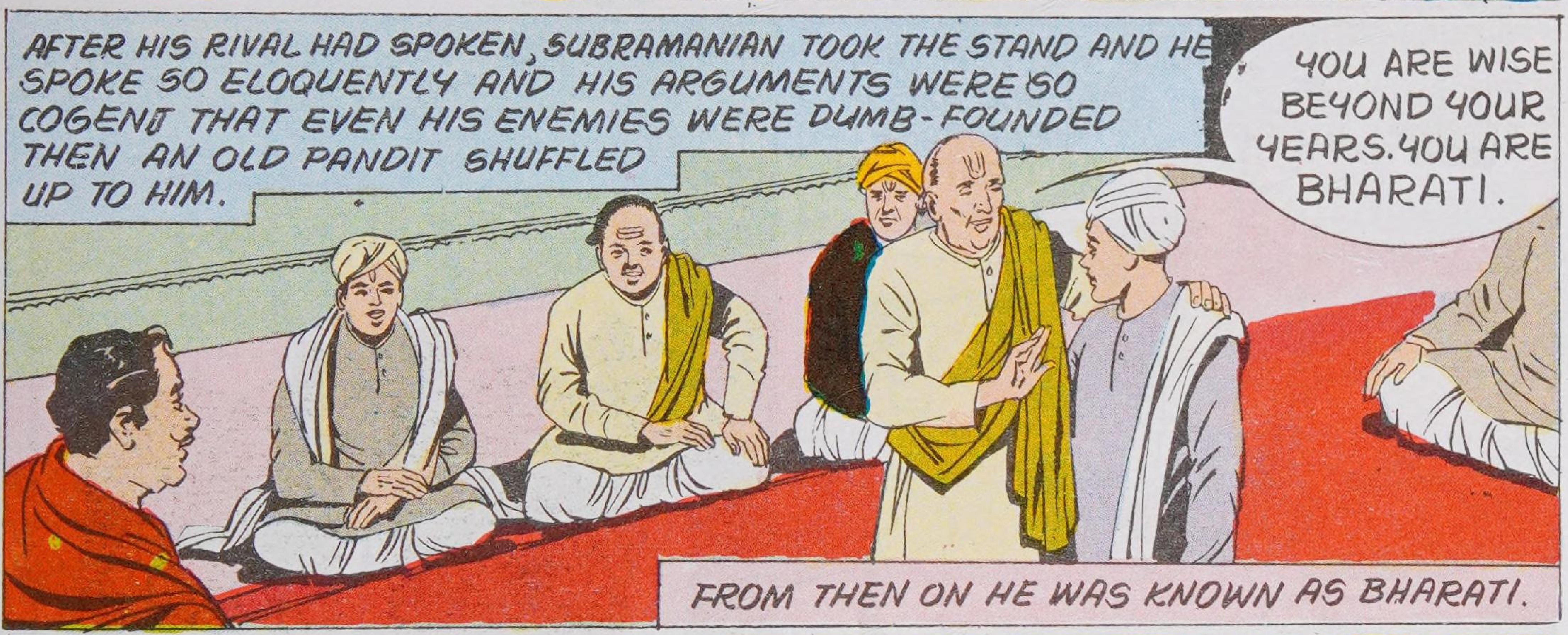

THE LEARNED PANDIT HAS OVERLOOKED ONE THING.
THE CLOUDS POUR RAIN AT THEIR PLEASURE, NOT AT THE BIDDING OF A PANDIT.
SUBRAMANIAN FAILED TO QUALIFY FOR THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION.
SOON—
IT'S GOOD TO BE GOING BACK HOME.
BUT CHINNASWAMI WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED.
I HAD SUCH HOPES FOR YOU. WELL... WHAT HAS HAPPENED HAS HAPPENED. I'LL PUT YOU IN THE RAJA'S SERVICE.
SUBRAMANIAN BEGAN TO VISIT THE PALACE AGAIN AND SOME OF THE RAJA'S FRIENDS BECAME ENVIOUS OF HIS GOOD STANDING WITH THE RAJA. ONE DAY—
YOU SEEM TO BE SO VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE...
YET YOU FAILED IN THE EXAMINATION.
WHAT'S THAT TO YOU? IF YOU THINK YOU ARE CLEVERER THAN ME...


...LET'S HAVE A DEBATE ON SOME TOPIC.
WHY NOT ON EDUCATION?

SUBRAMANIAN AGREED. THE DEBATE WAS HELD IN THE PRESENCE OF THE RAJA.

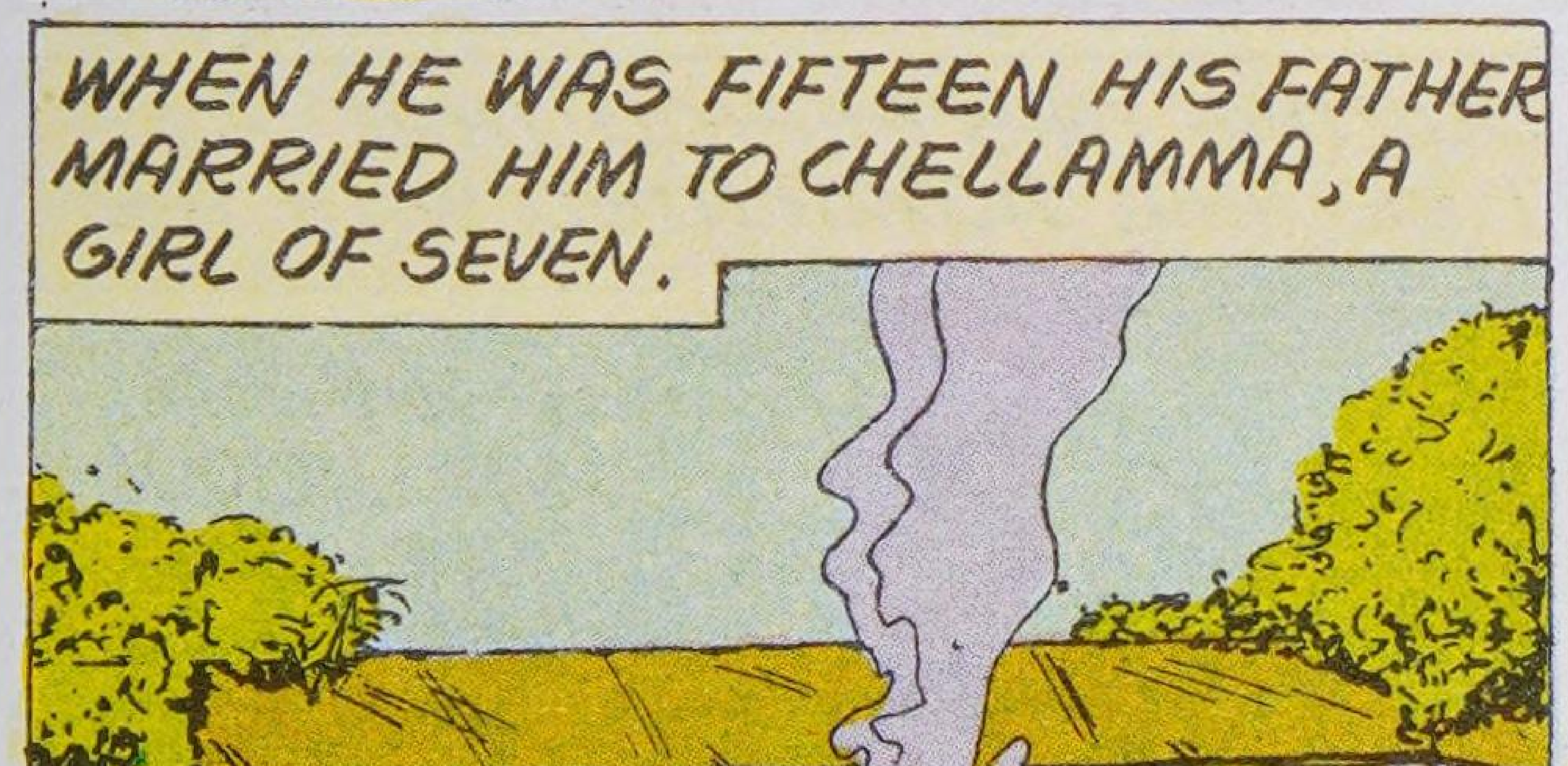


AFTER HIS RIVAL HAD SPOKEN, SUBRAMANIAN TOOK THE STAND AND HE SPOKE SO ELOQUENTLY AND HIS ARGUMENTS WERE SO COGENT THAT EVEN HIS ENEMIES WERE DUMB-FOUNDED THEN AN OLD PANDIT SHUFFLED UP TO HIM.


YOU ARE WISE BEYOND YOUR YEARS. YOU ARE BHARATI.

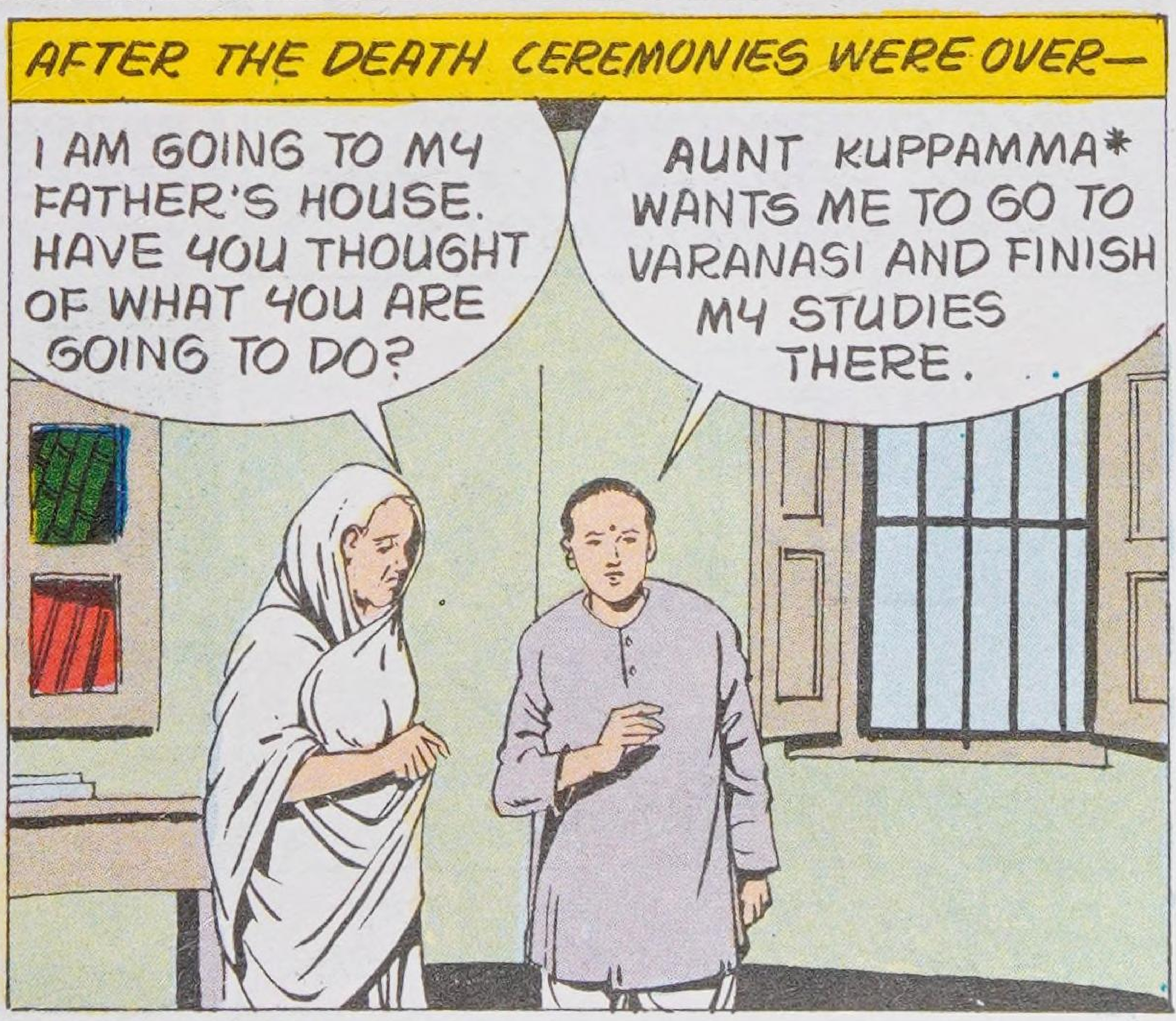
FROM THEN ON HE WAS KNOWN AS BHARATI.

WHEN HE WAS FIFTEEN HIS FATHER MARRIED HIM TO CHELLAMMA, A GIRL OF SEVEN.

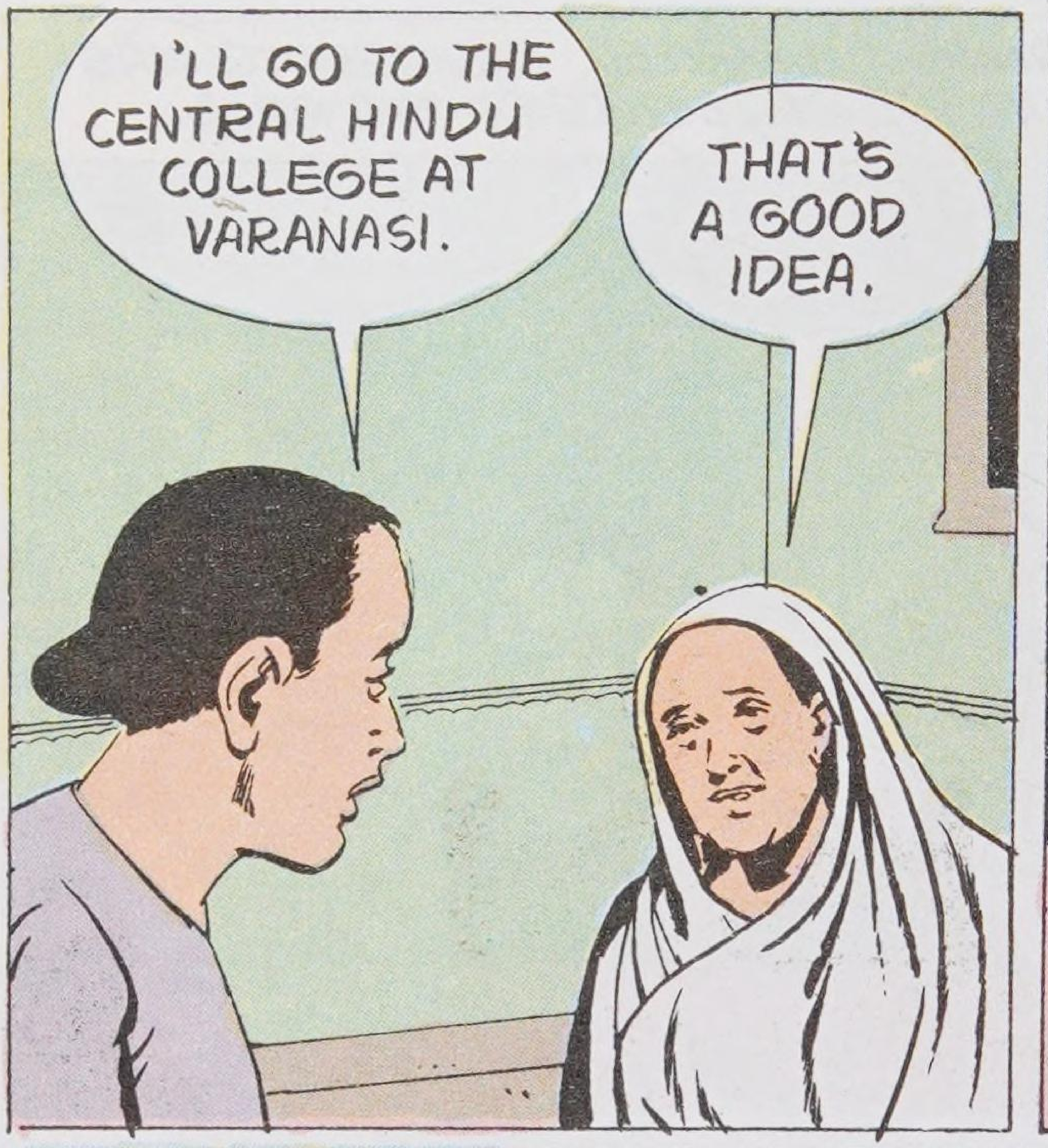


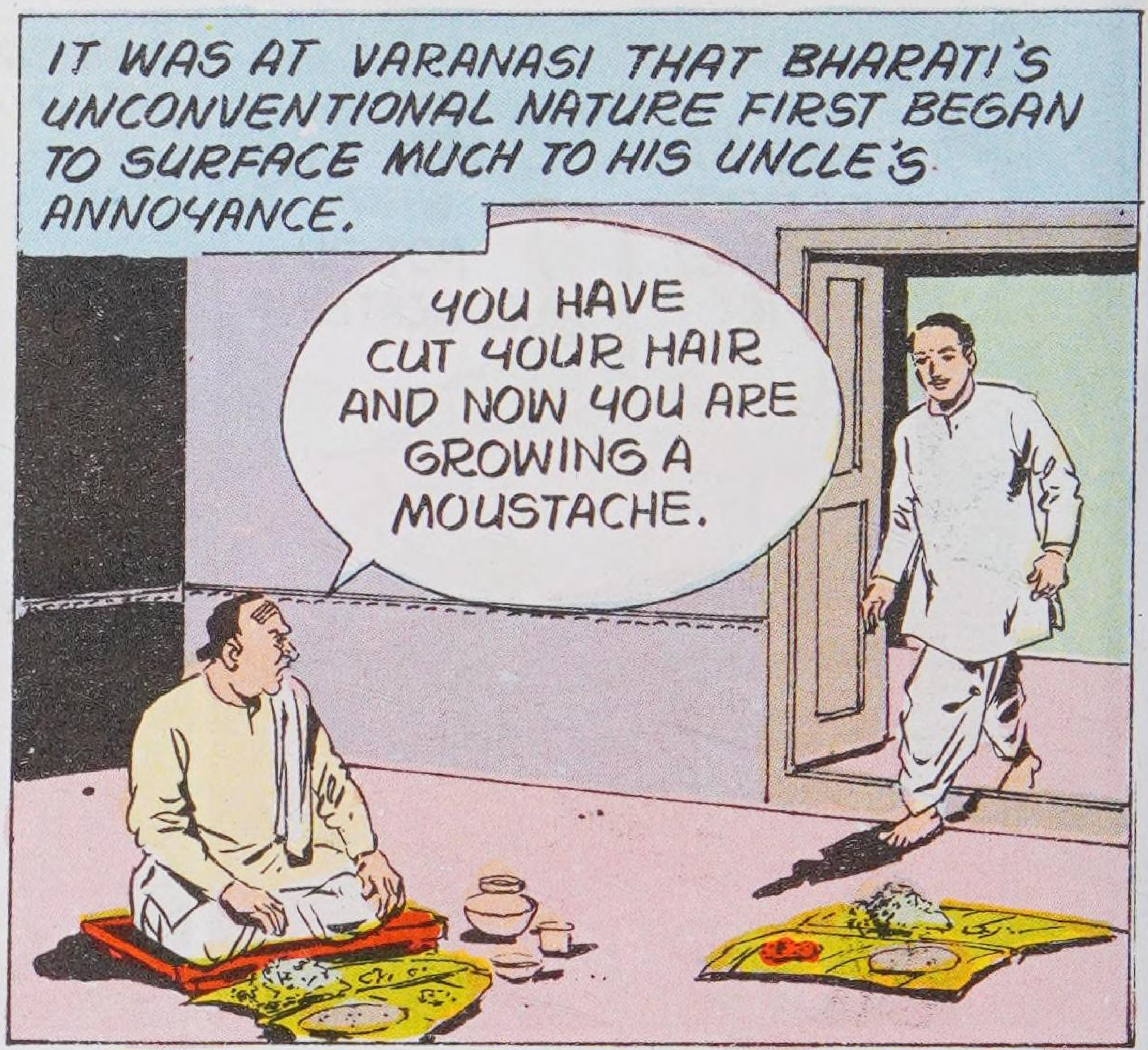
THE FOLLOWING YEAR CHINNASWAMI IYER DIED.

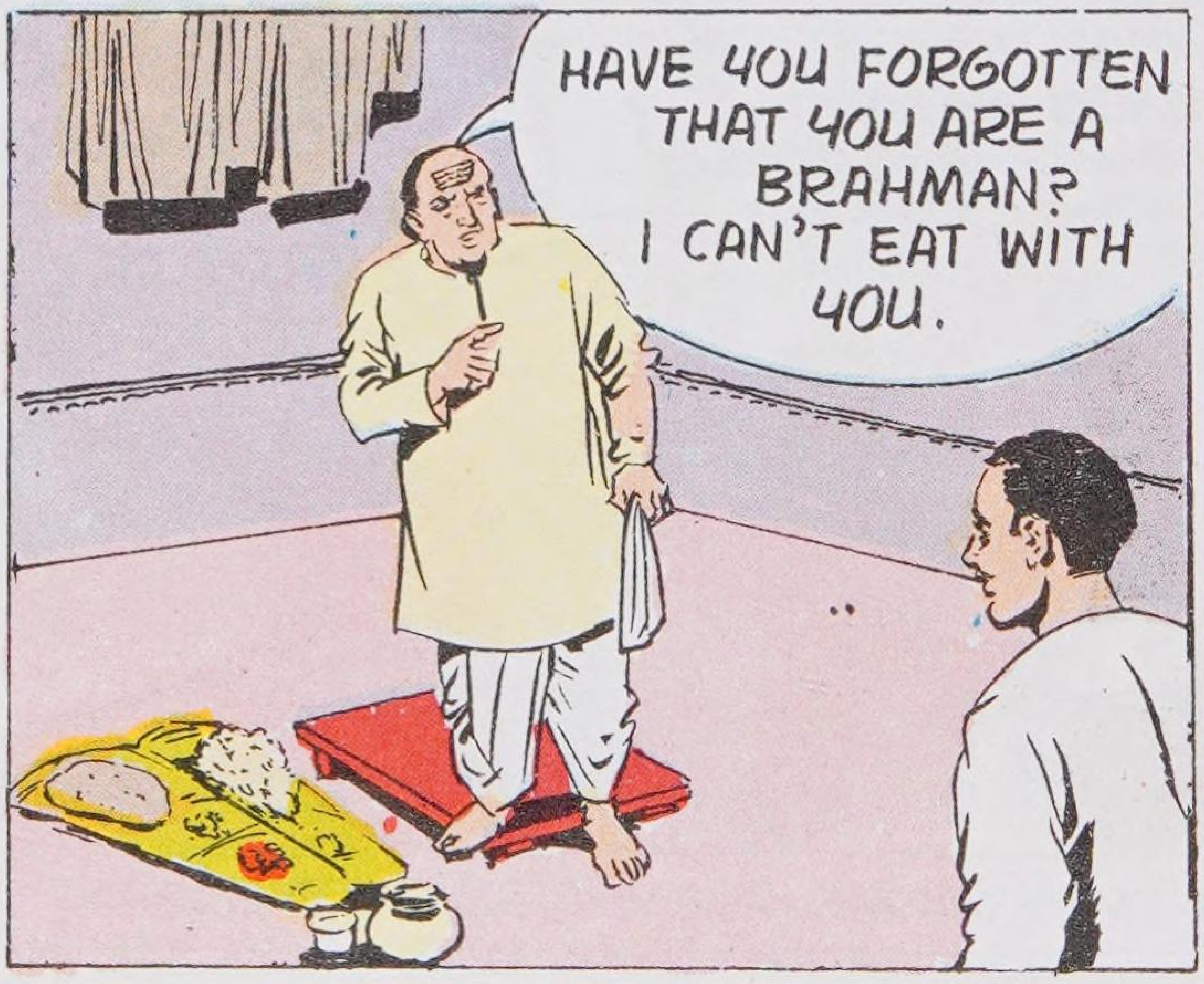
AFTER THE DEATH CEREMONIES WERE OVER—

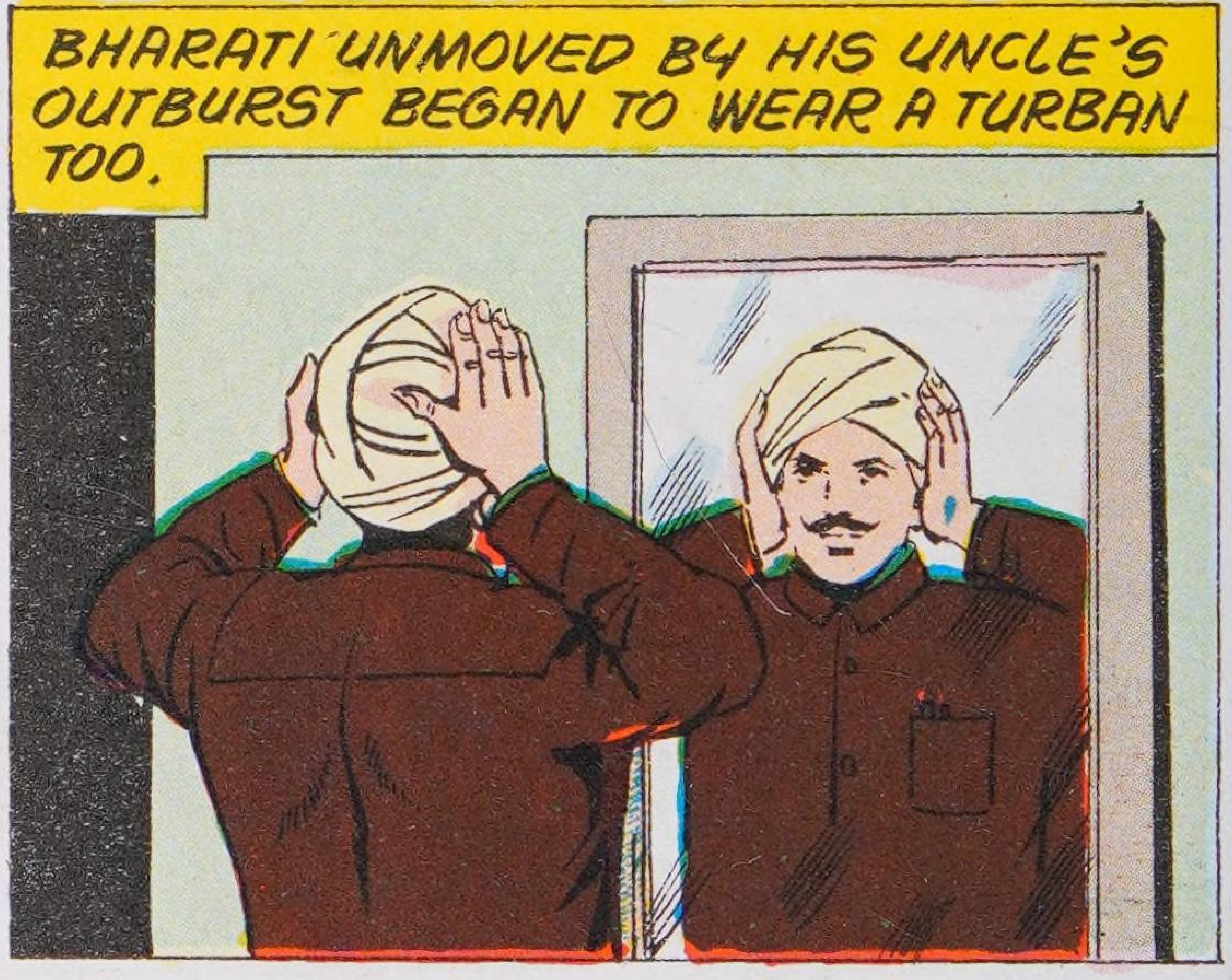

I AM GOING TO MY FATHER'S HOUSE. HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO DO?
AUNT KUPPAMMA* WANTS ME TO GO TO VARANASI AND FINISH MY STUDIES THERE.

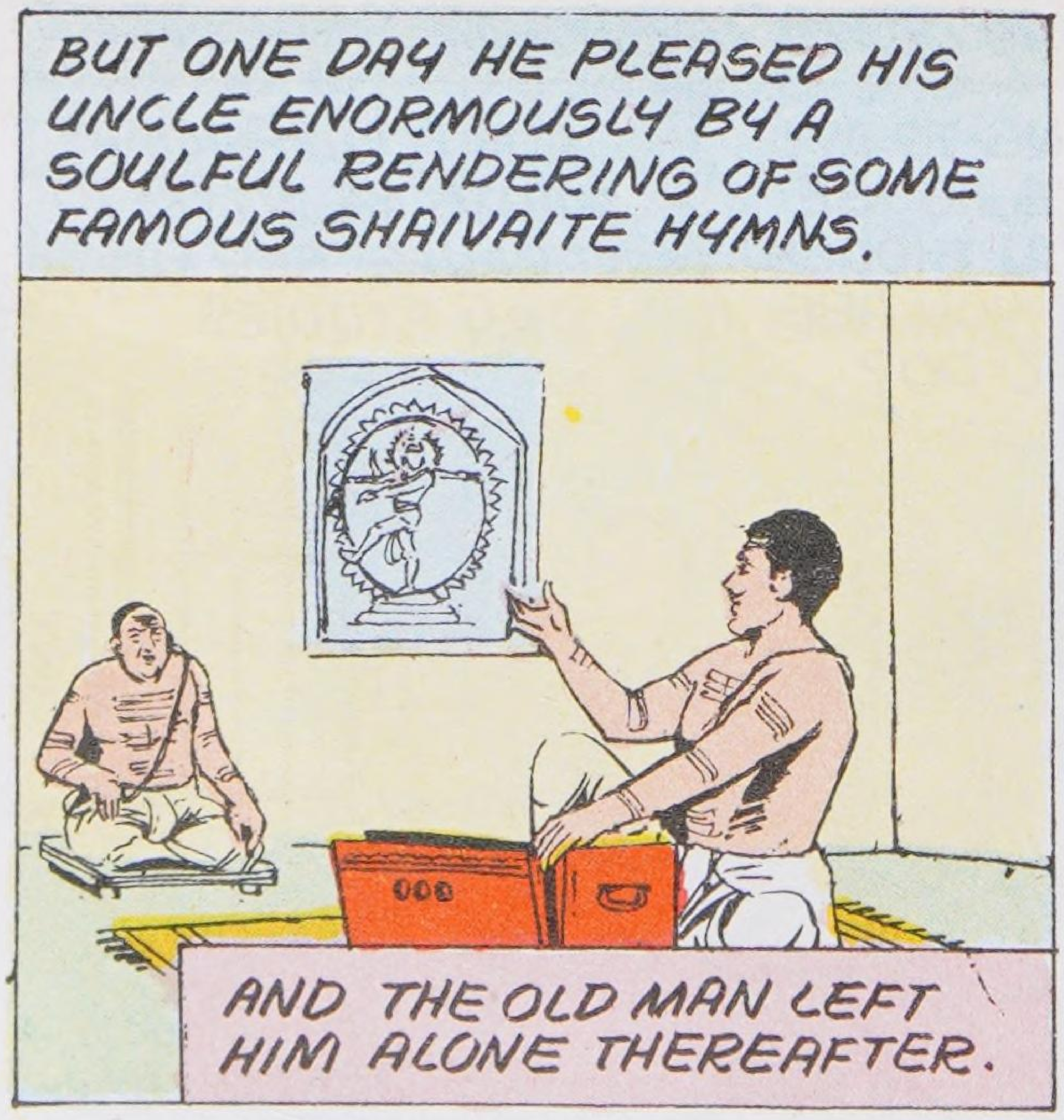
* HIS PATERNAL AUNT WHO LIVED WITH HER HUSBAND IN VARANASI

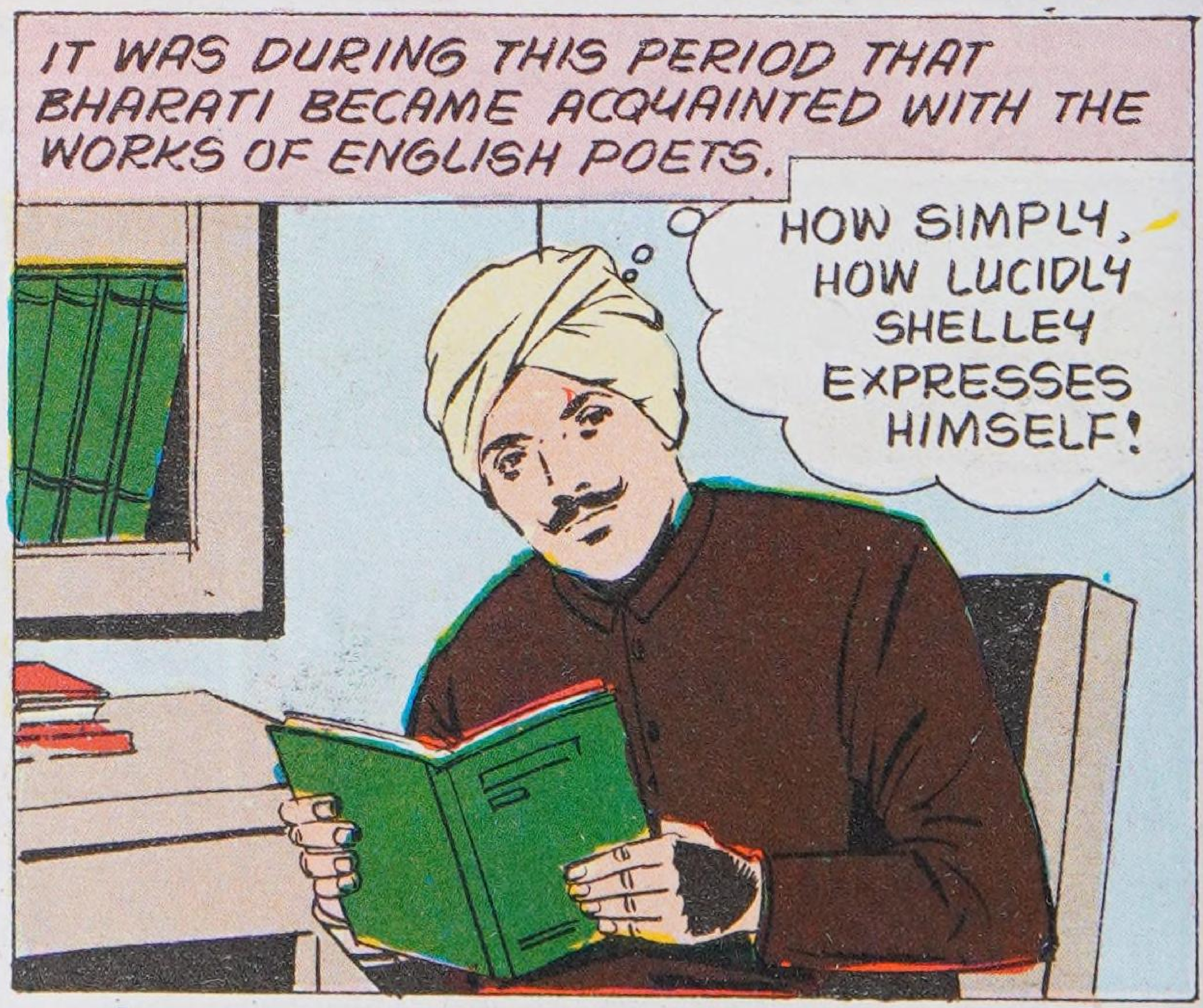

I'LL GO TO THE CENTRAL HINDU COLLEGE AT VARANASI.
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.

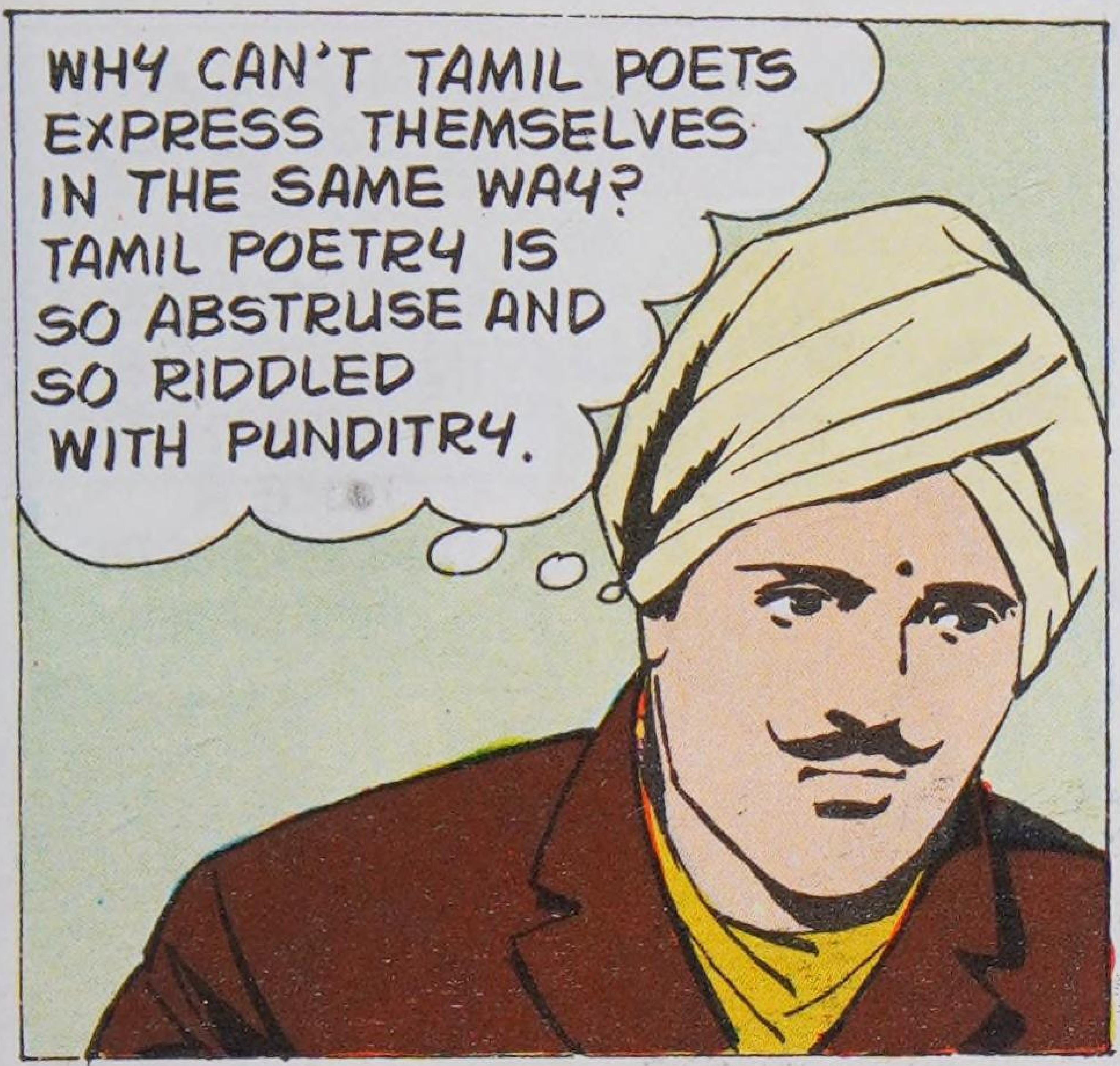

IT WAS AT VARANASI THAT BHARATI'S UNCONVENTIONAL NATURE FIRST BEGAN TO SURFACE MUCH TO HIS UNCLE'S ANNOYANCE.
YOU HAVE CUT YOUR HAIR AND NOW YOU ARE GROWING A MOUSTACHE.


HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT YOU ARE A BRAHMAN? I CAN'T EAT WITH YOU.

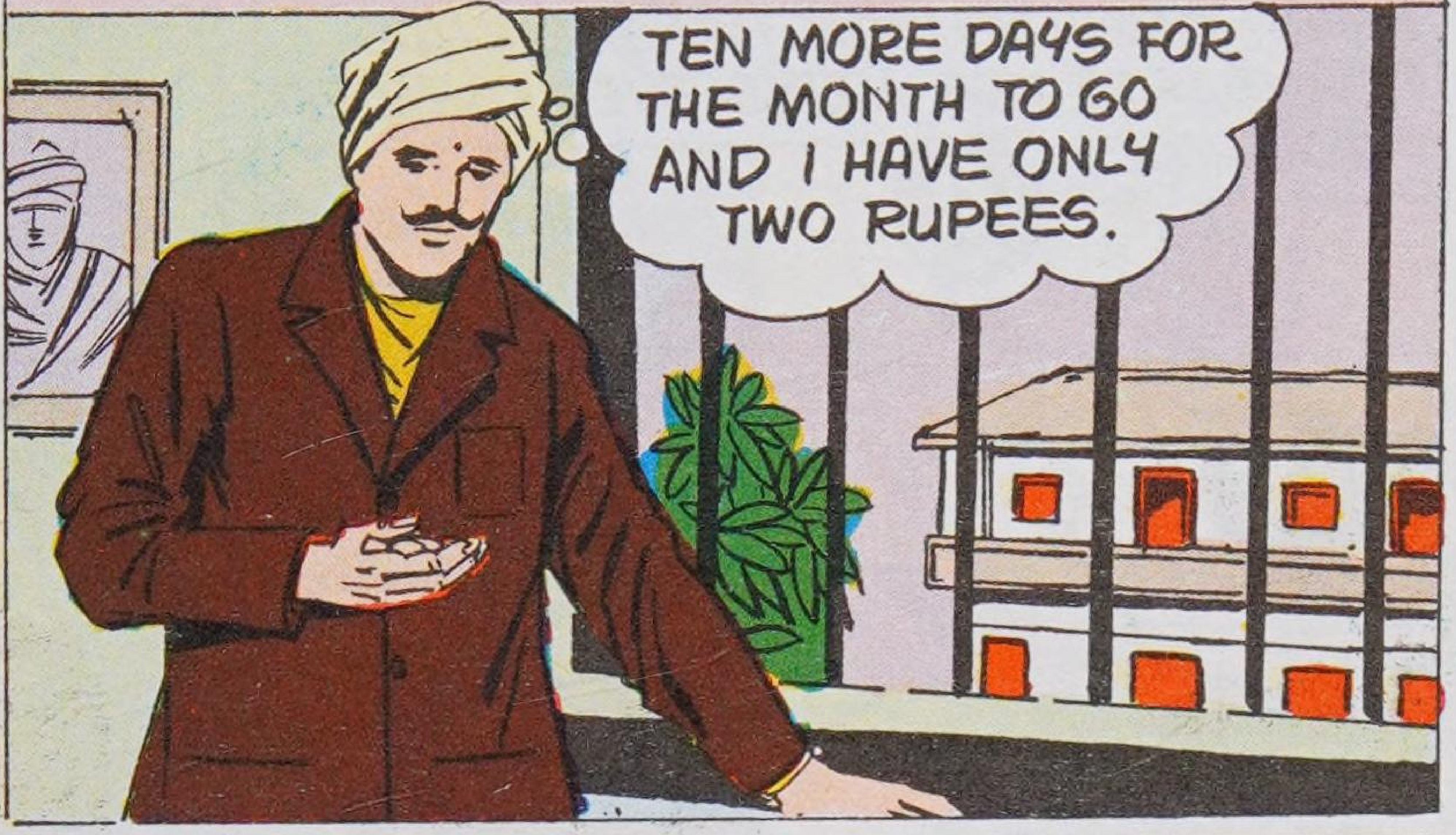

BHARATI UNMOVED BY HIS UNCLE'S OUTBURST BEGAN TO WEAR A TURBAN TOO.


BUT ONE DAY HE PLEASED HIS UNCLE ENORMOUSLY BY A SOULFUL RENDERING OF SOME FAMOUS SHAIVAITE HYMNS.
AND THE OLD MAN LEFT HIM ALONE THEREAFTER.

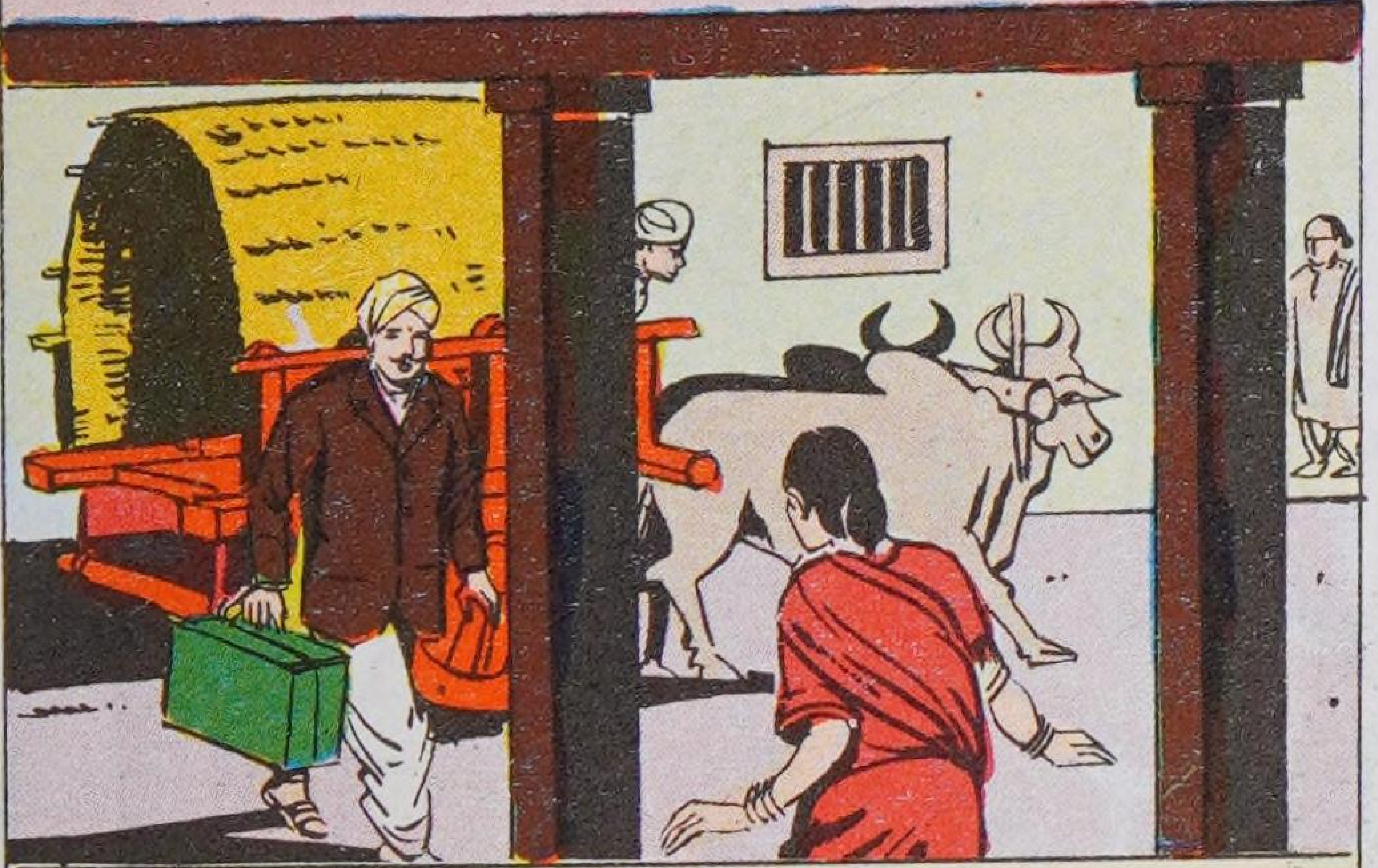

IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD THAT BHARATI BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE WORKS OF ENGLISH POETS.
HOW SIMPLY, HOW LUCIDLY SHELLEY EXPRESSES HIMSELF!


WHY CAN'T TAMIL POETS EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN THE SAME WAY? TAMIL POETRY IS SO ABSTRUSE AND SO RIDDLED WITH PUNDITRY.

WHEN BHARATI FINISHED HIS STUDIES, HE TOOK UP THE JOB OF A TEACHER ON A SALARY OF TWENTY RUPEES A MONTH.

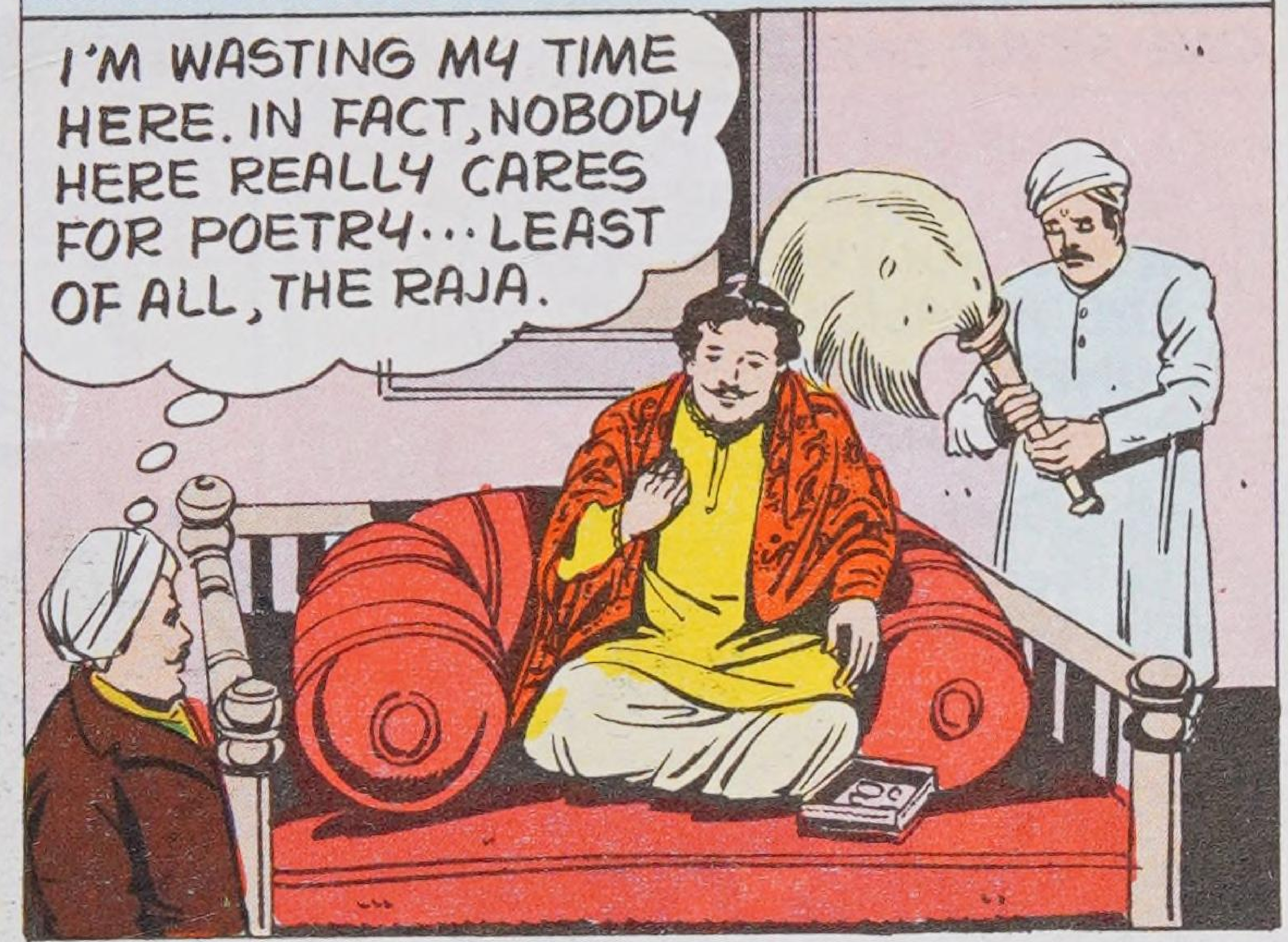

TEN MORE DAYS FOR THE MONTH TO GO AND I HAVE ONLY TWO RUPEES.

HIS OLD FRIEND, THE RAJA, HEARING OF HIS DIFFICULTIES CALLED HIM BACK TO ETTAYAPURAM AND APPOINTED HIM COURT POET.

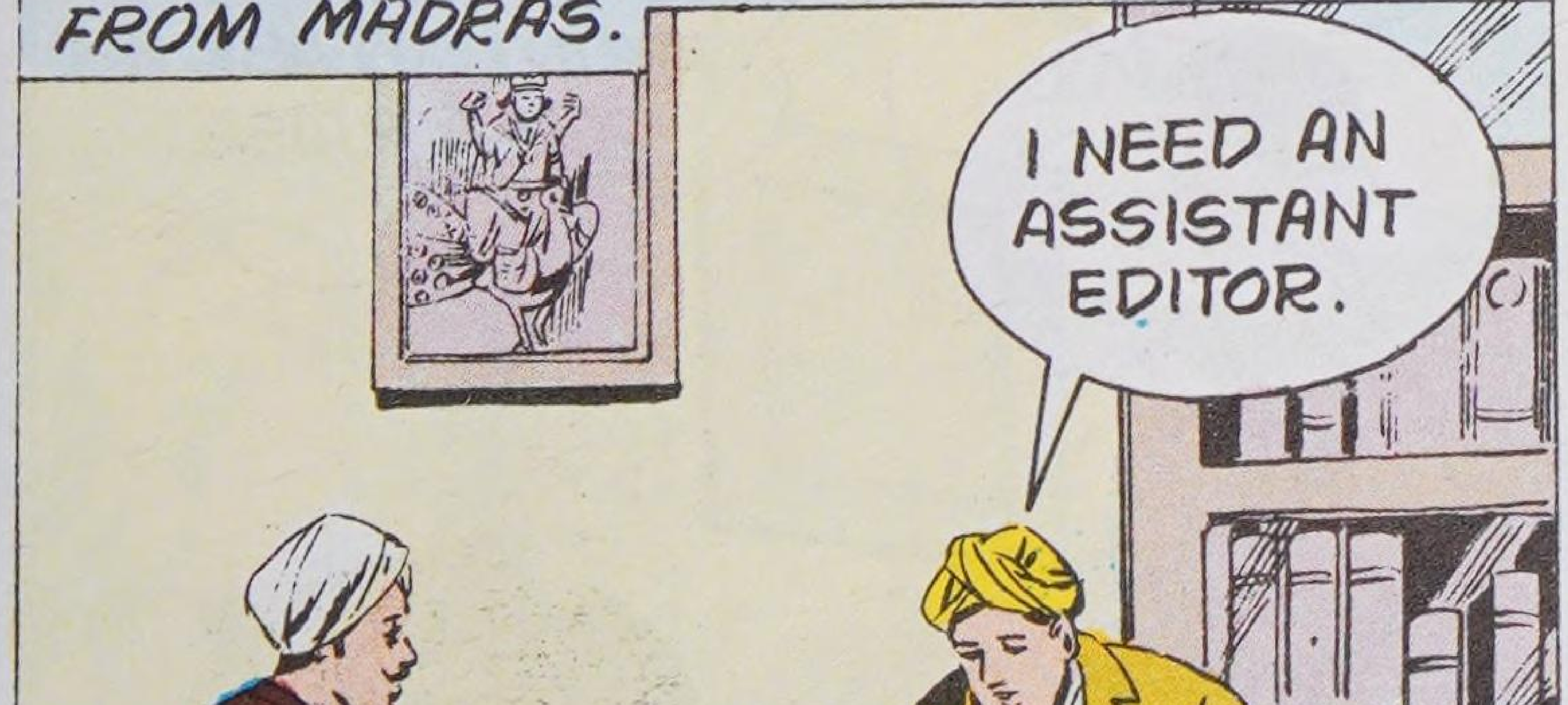


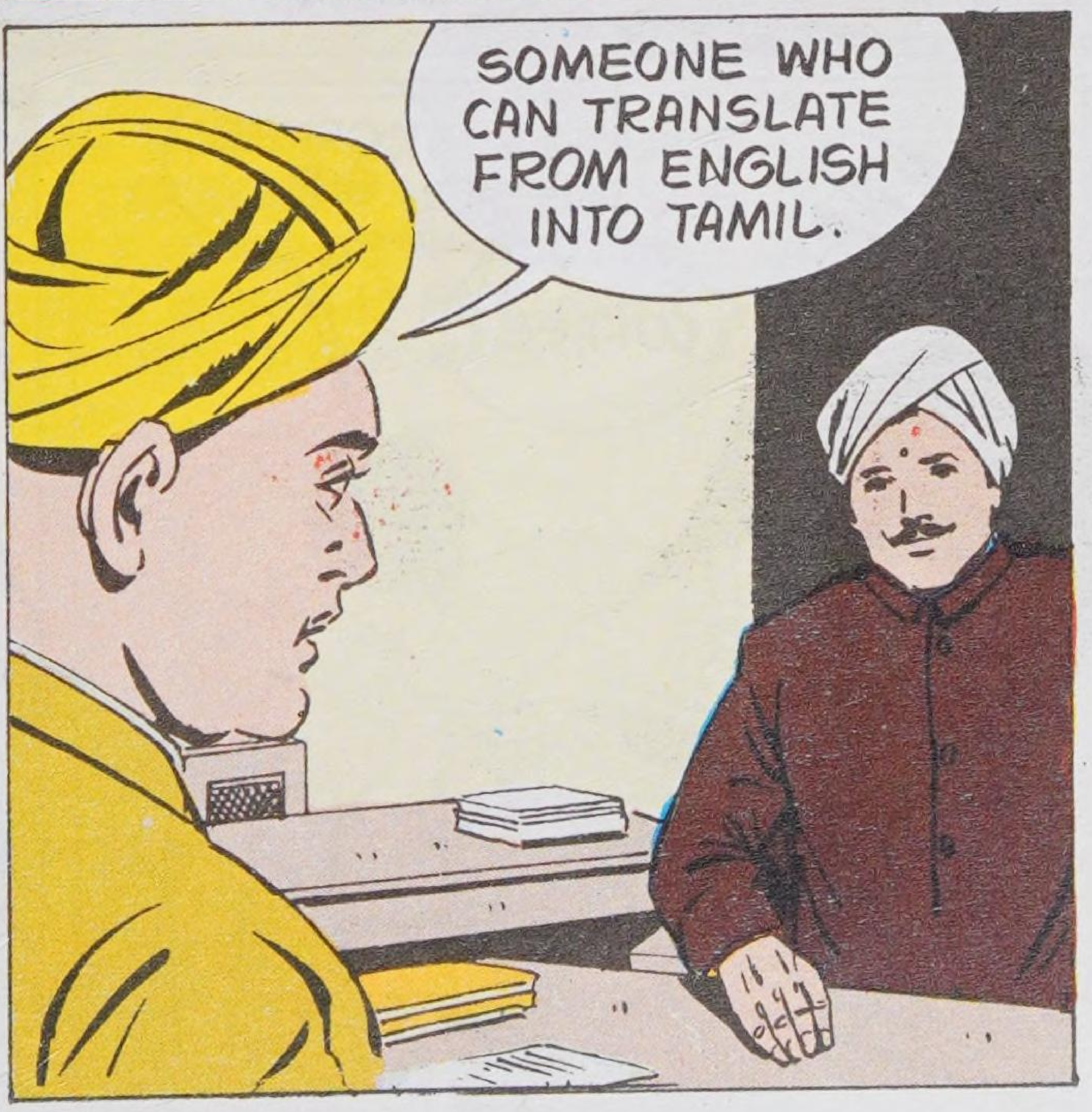
BHARATI WAS TWENTY AT THAT TIME. HE AND CHELLAMMA SET UP HOUSE TOGETHER.

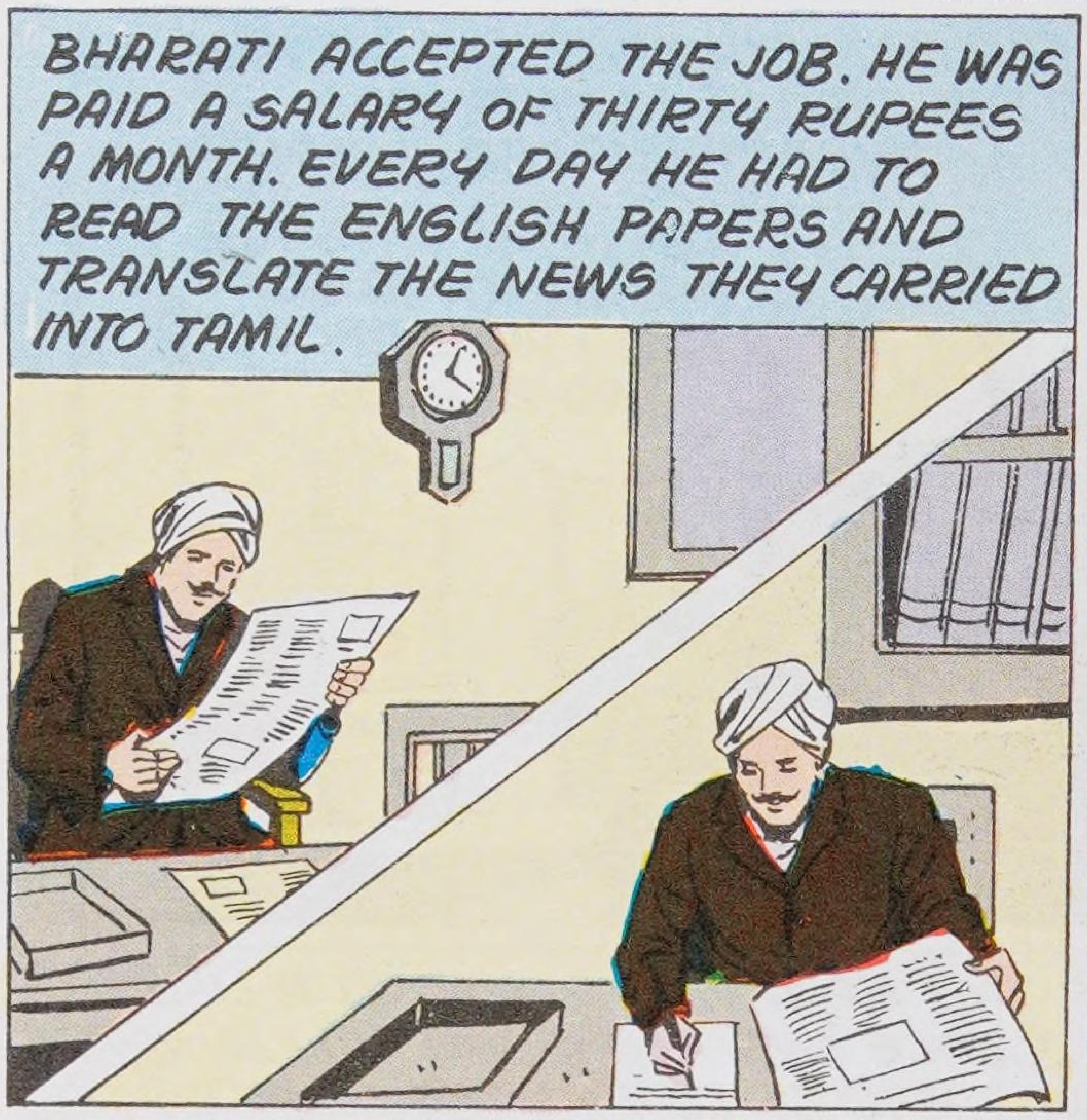
BUT THE RAJA WAS GIVEN TO A LIFE OF INDOLENCE AND PLEASURE AND BHARATI SOON TIRED OF LIFE AT THE PALACE.

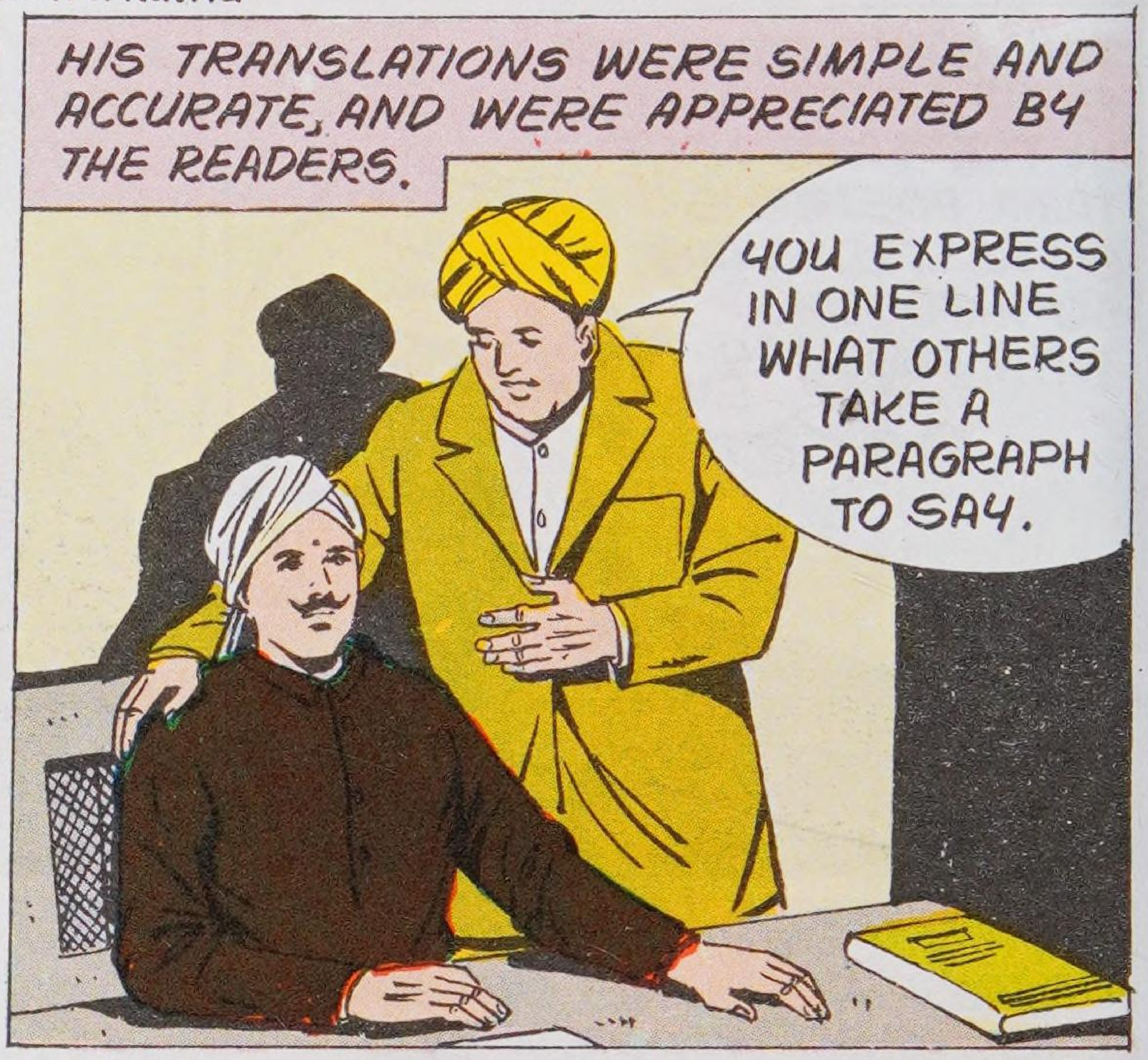

I'M WASTING MY TIME HERE. IN FACT, NOBODY HERE REALLY CARES FOR POETRY... LEAST OF ALL, THE RAJA.

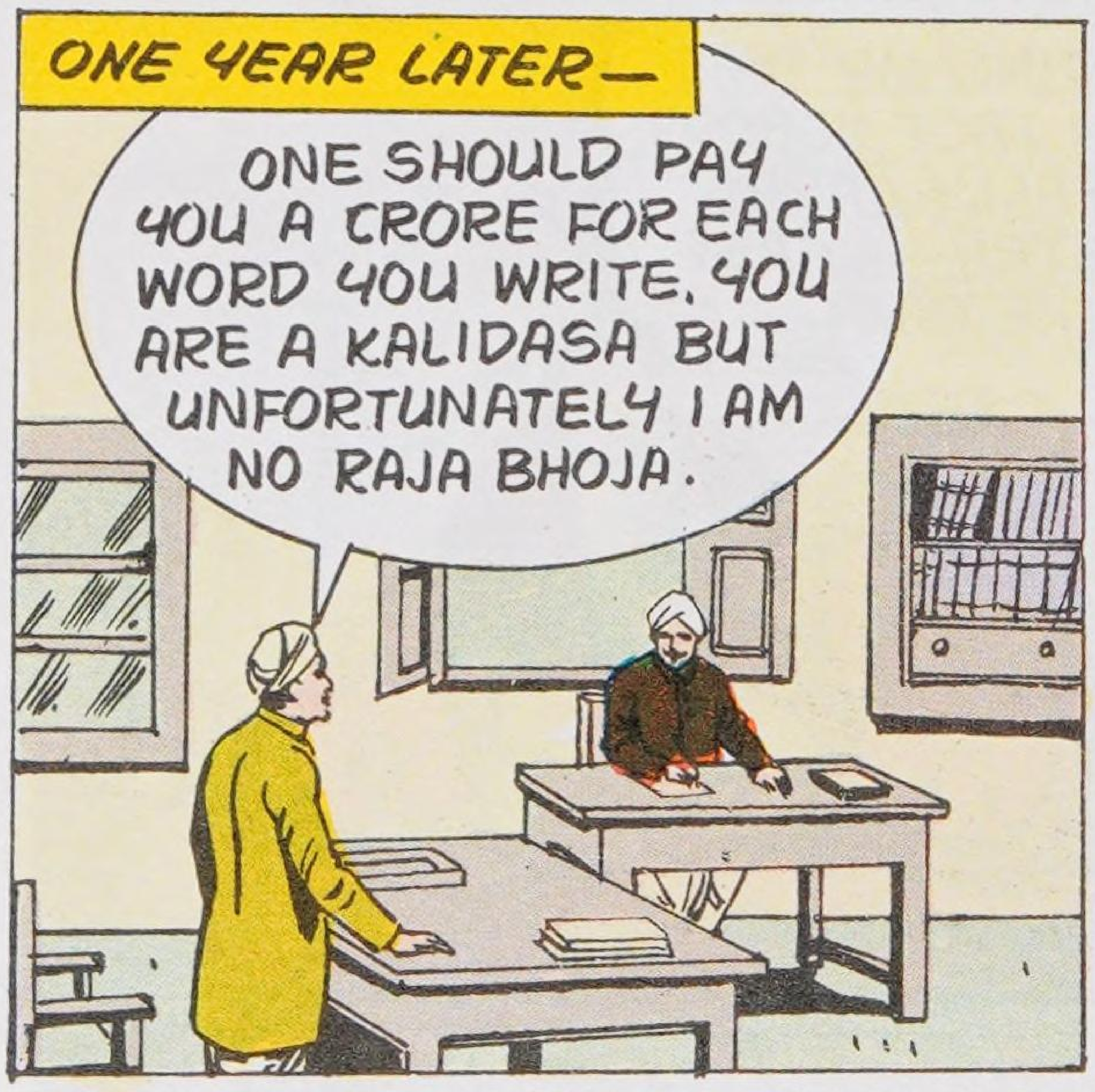
IN 1904 HE PARTED COMPANY WITH THE RAJA AND WENT TO MADURAI. THERE HE MET G. SUBRAMANIA IYER, EDITOR OF SWADESHAMITRAN, A DAILY PUBLISHED FROM MADRAS.

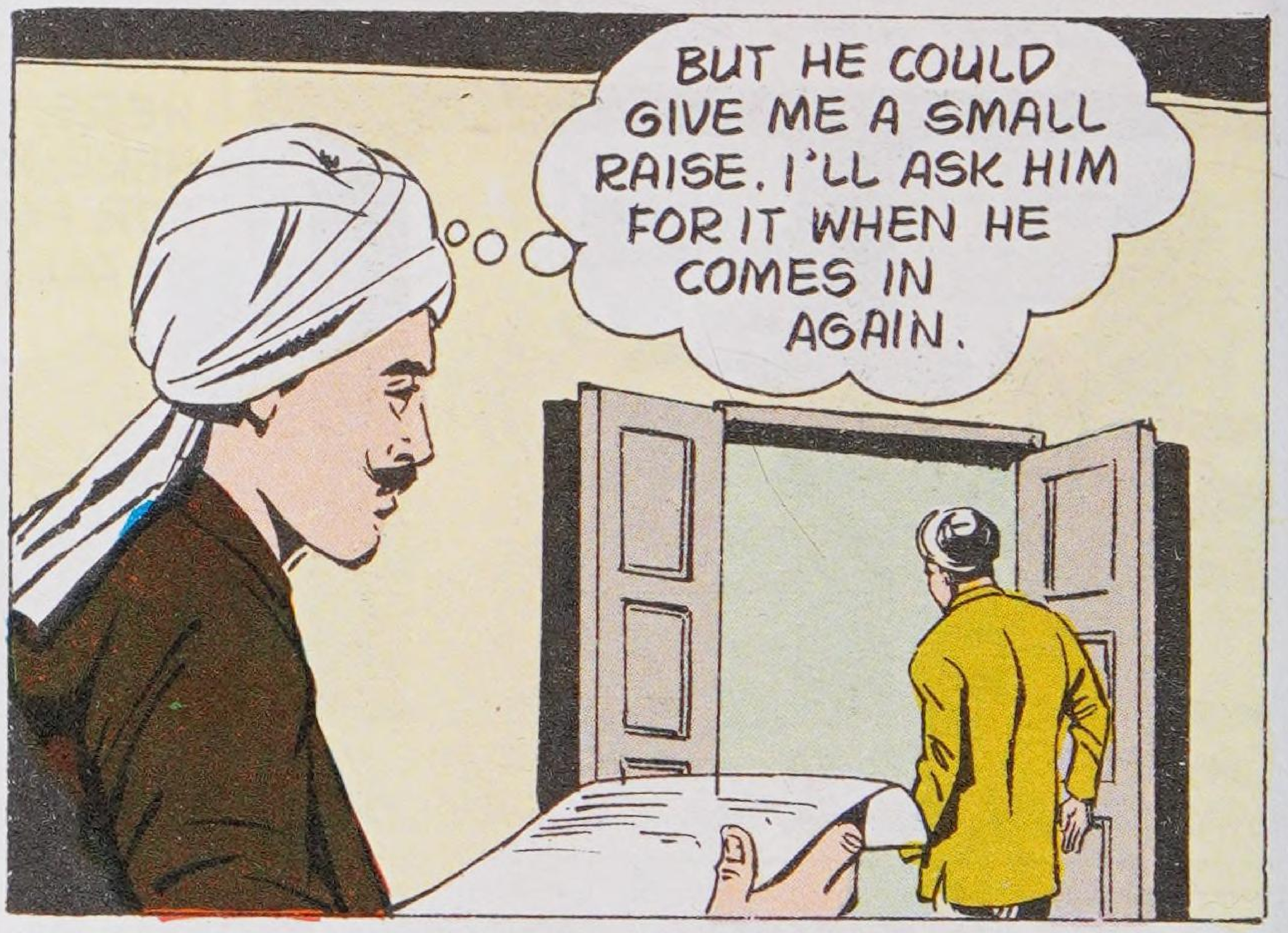

I NEED AN ASSISTANT EDITOR.

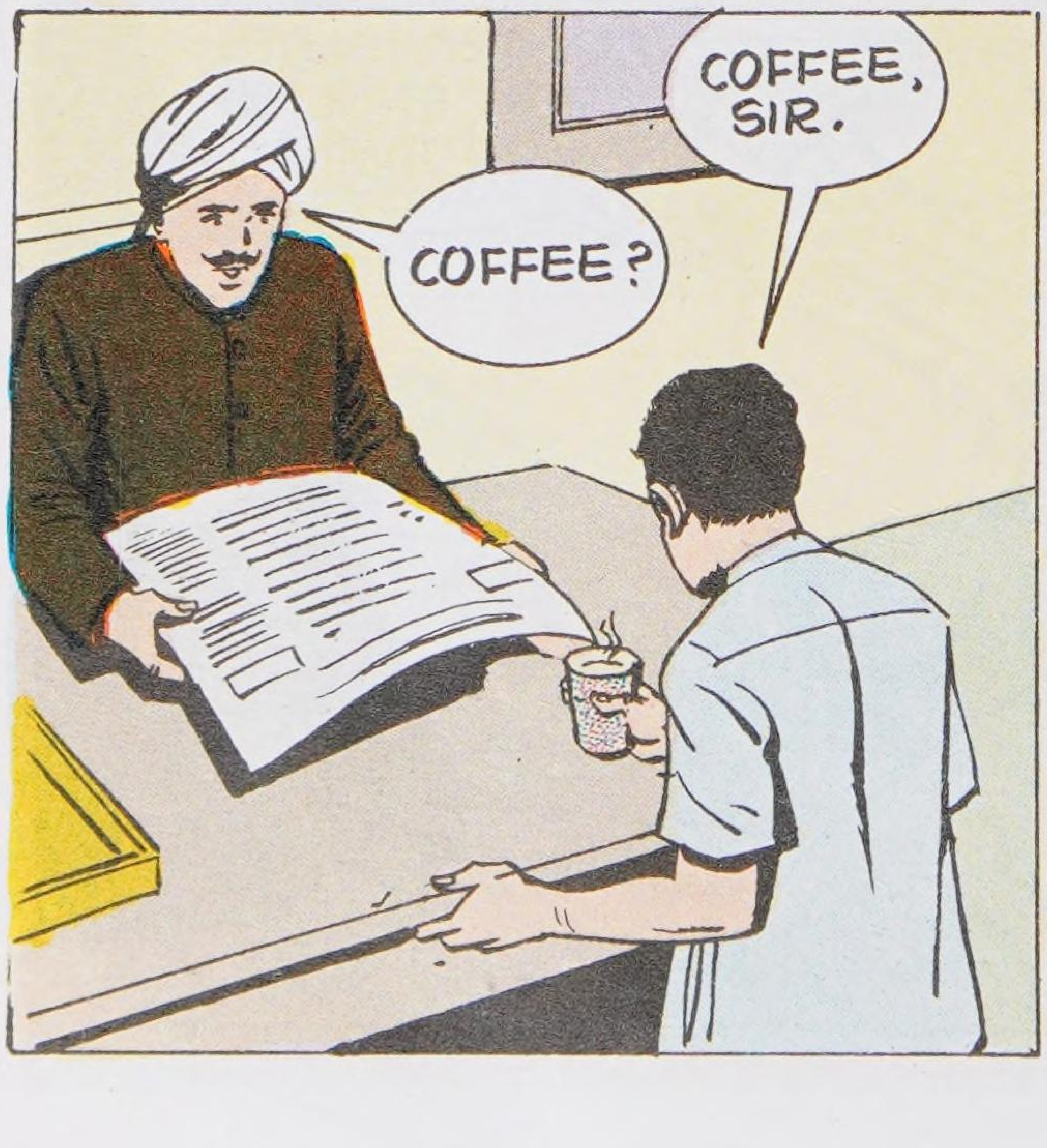

SOMEONE WHO CAN TRANSLATE FROM ENGLISH INTO TAMIL.

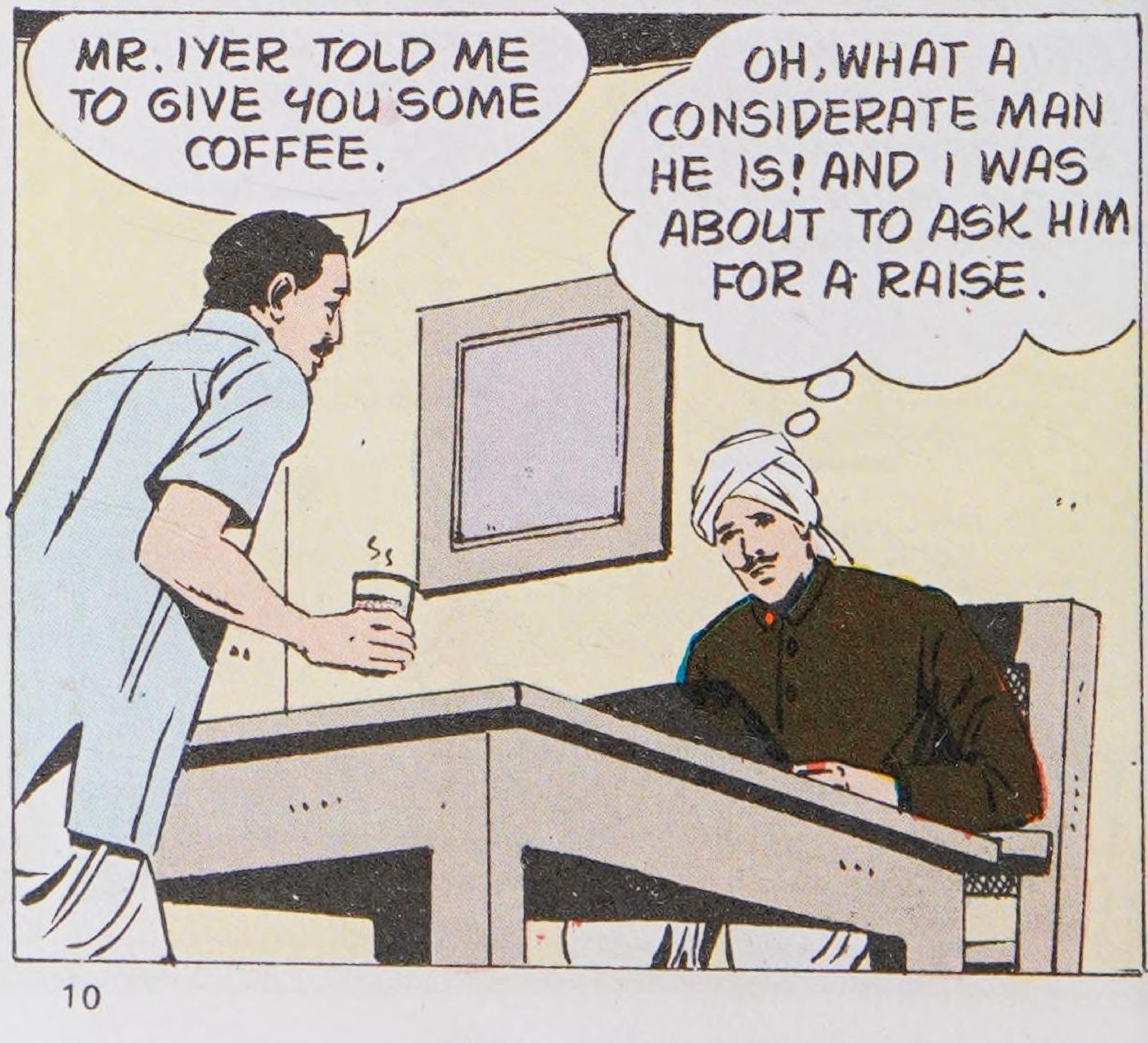

BHARATI ACCEPTED THE JOB. HE WAS PAID A SALARY OF THIRTY RUPEES A MONTH. EVERY DAY HE HAD TO READ THE ENGLISH PAPERS AND TRANSLATE THE NEWS THEY CARRIED INTO TAMIL.

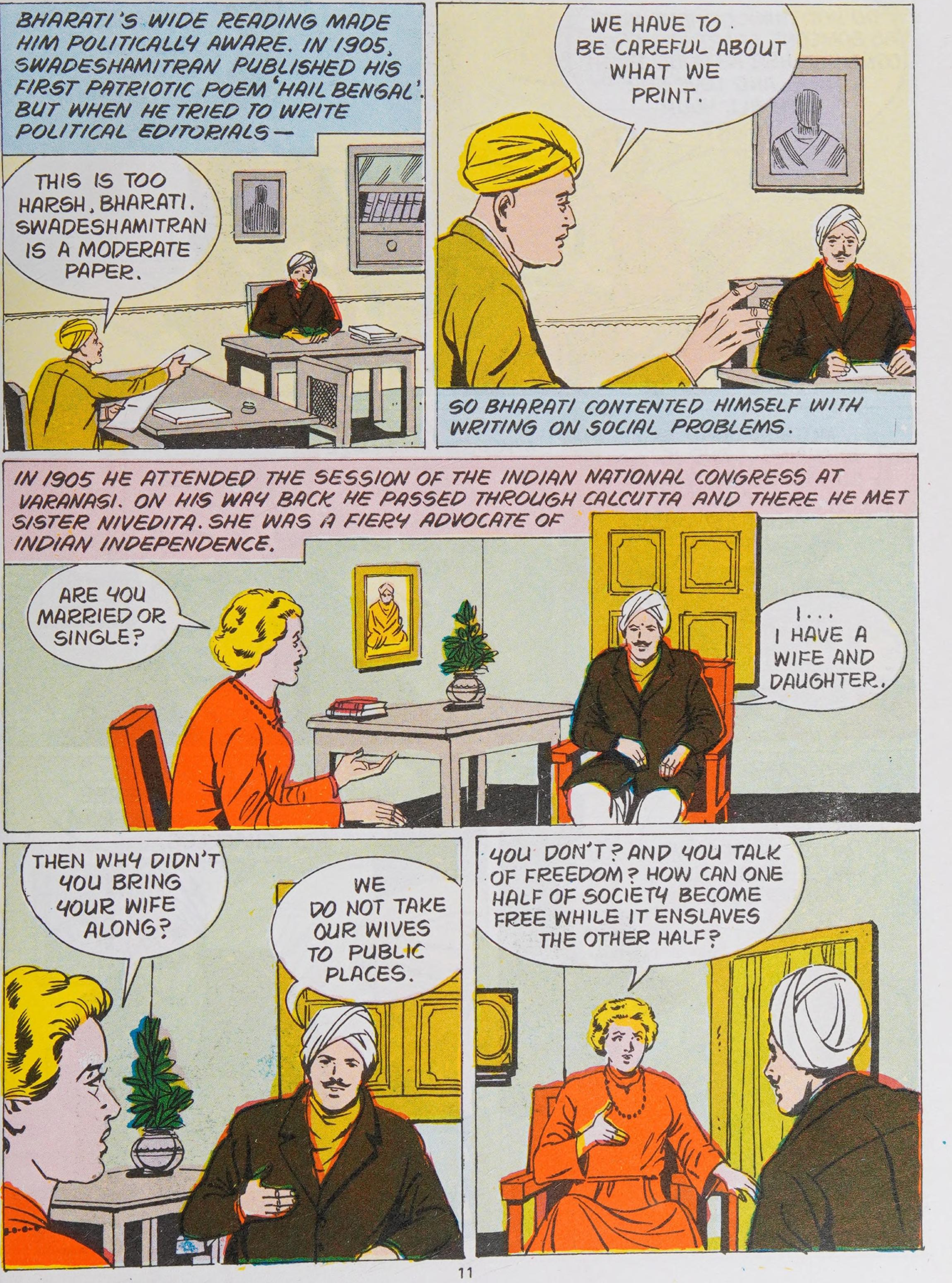

HIS TRANSLATIONS WERE SIMPLE AND ACCURATE, AND WERE APPRECIATED BY THE READERS.
YOU EXPRESS IN ONE LINE WHAT OTHERS TAKE A PARAGRAPH TO SAY.

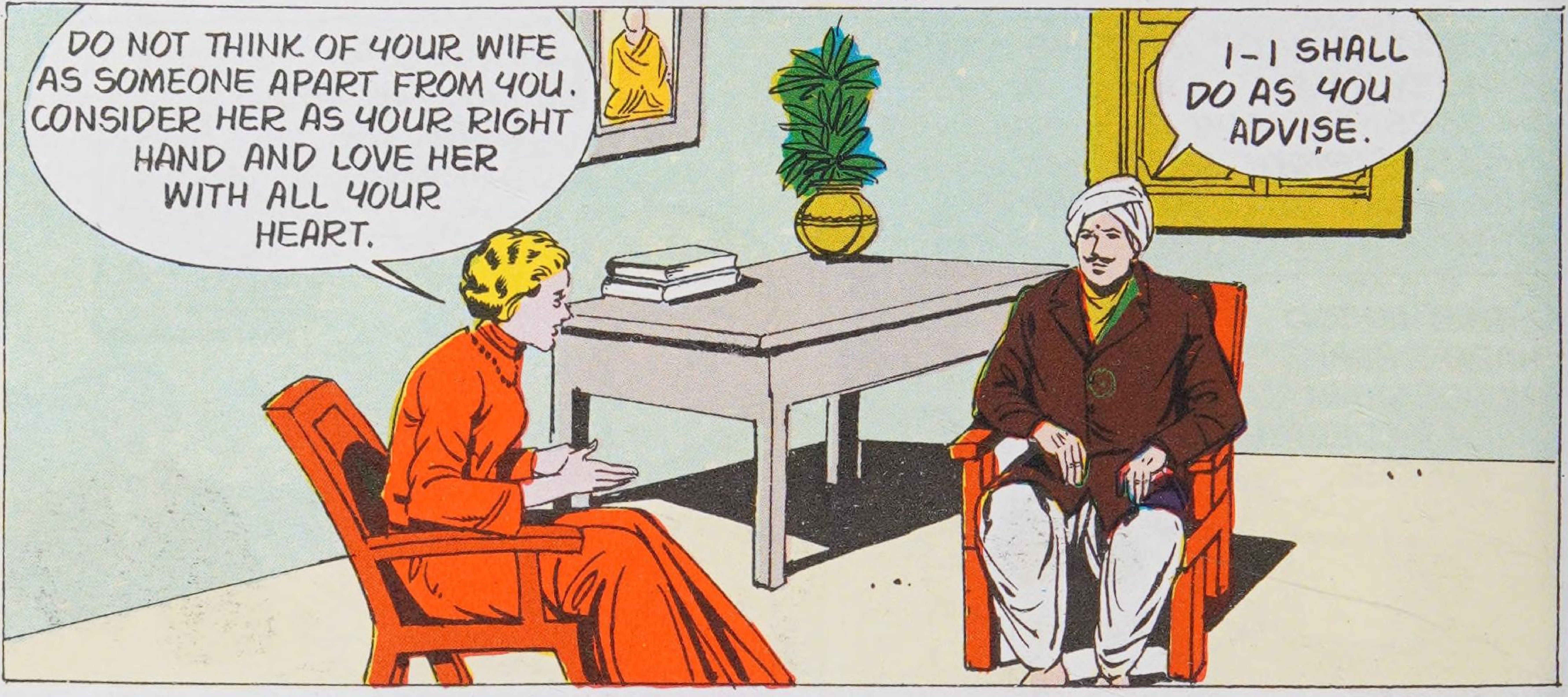

ONE YEAR LATER—
ONE SHOULD PAY YOU A CRORE FOR EACH WORD YOU WRITE. YOU ARE A KALIDASA BUT UNFORTUNATELY I AM NO RAJA BHOJA.

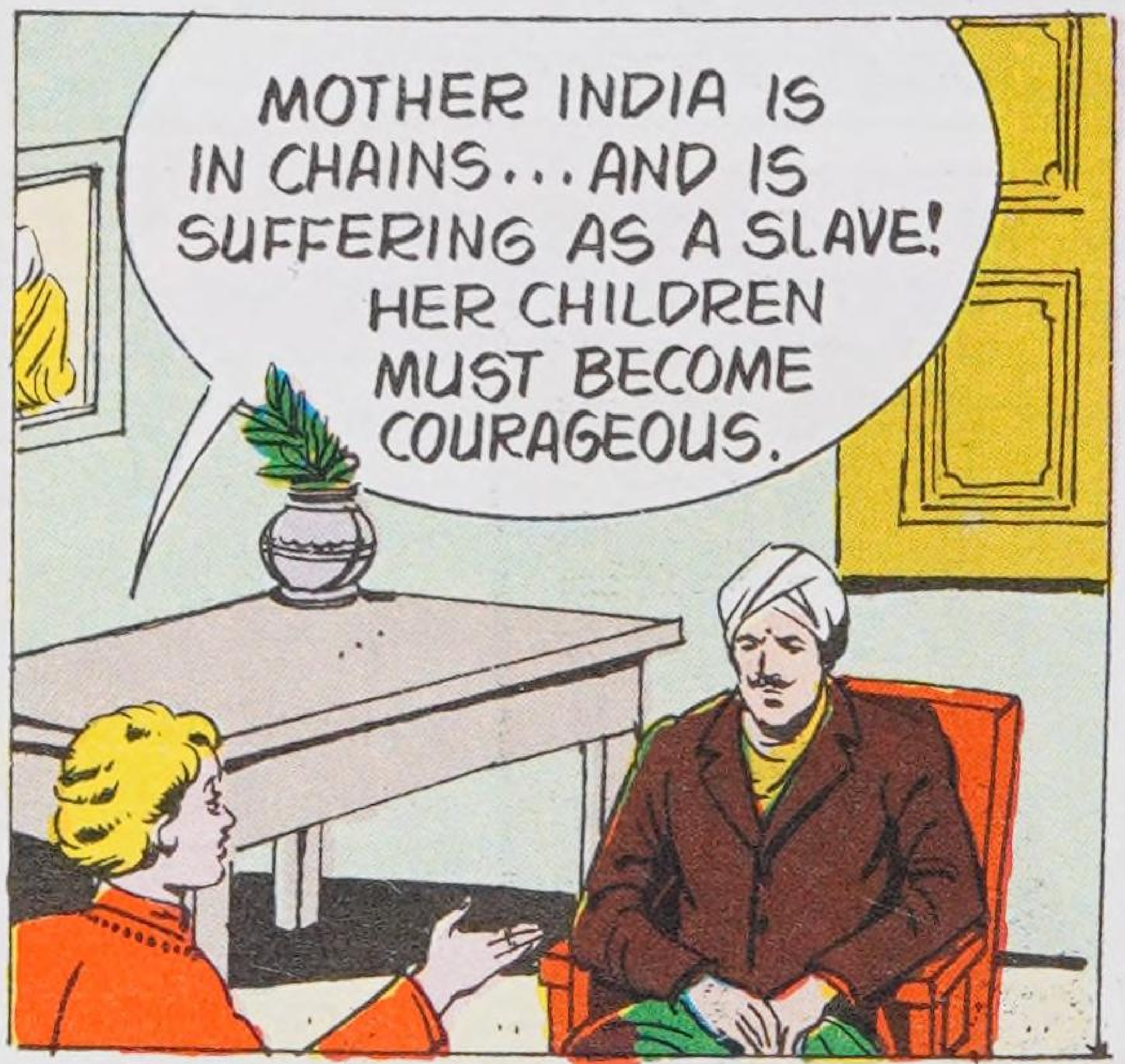

BUT HE COULD GIVE ME A SMALL RAISE. I'LL ASK HIM FOR IT WHEN HE COMES IN AGAIN.

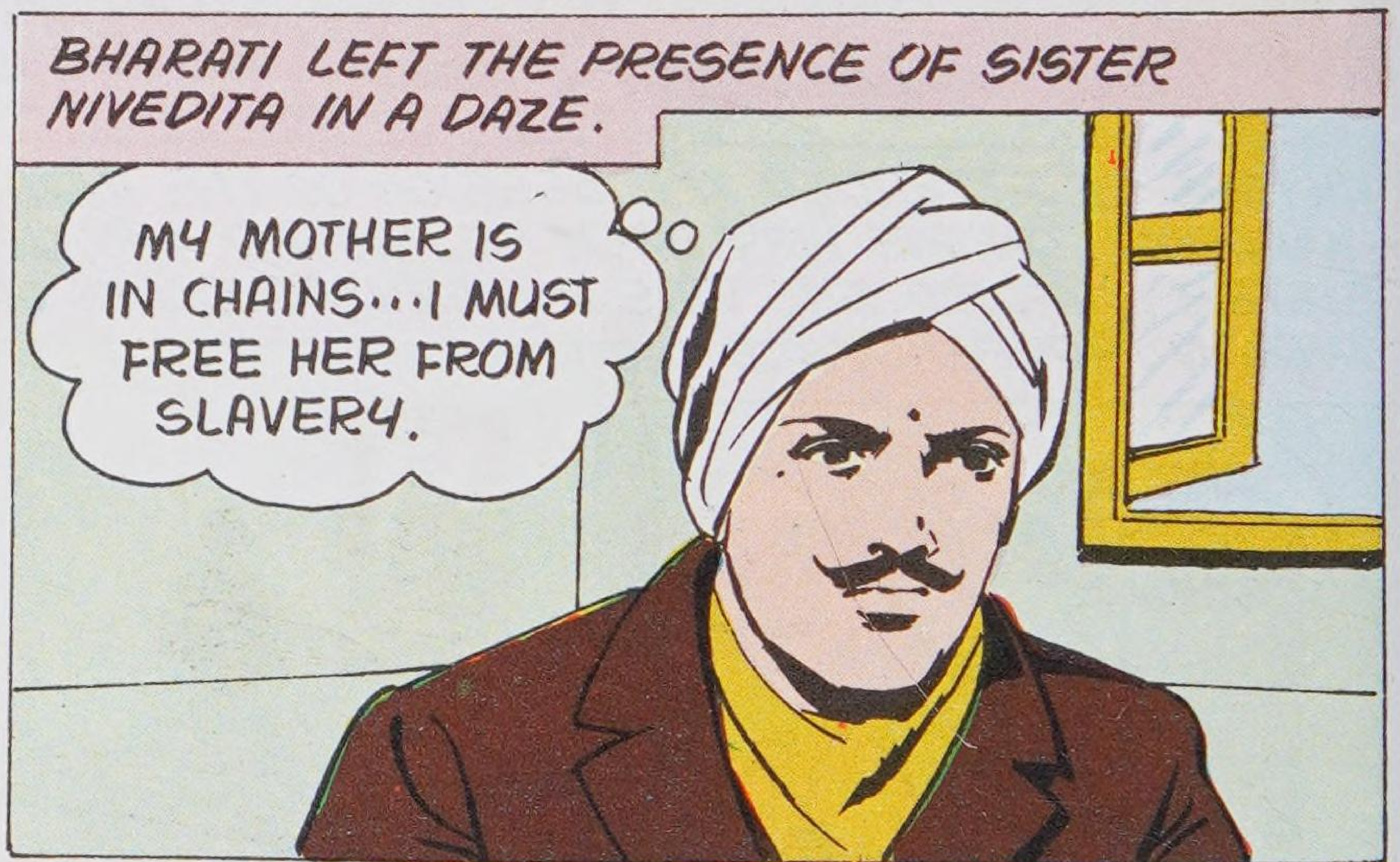

COFFEE, SIR.
COFFEE?

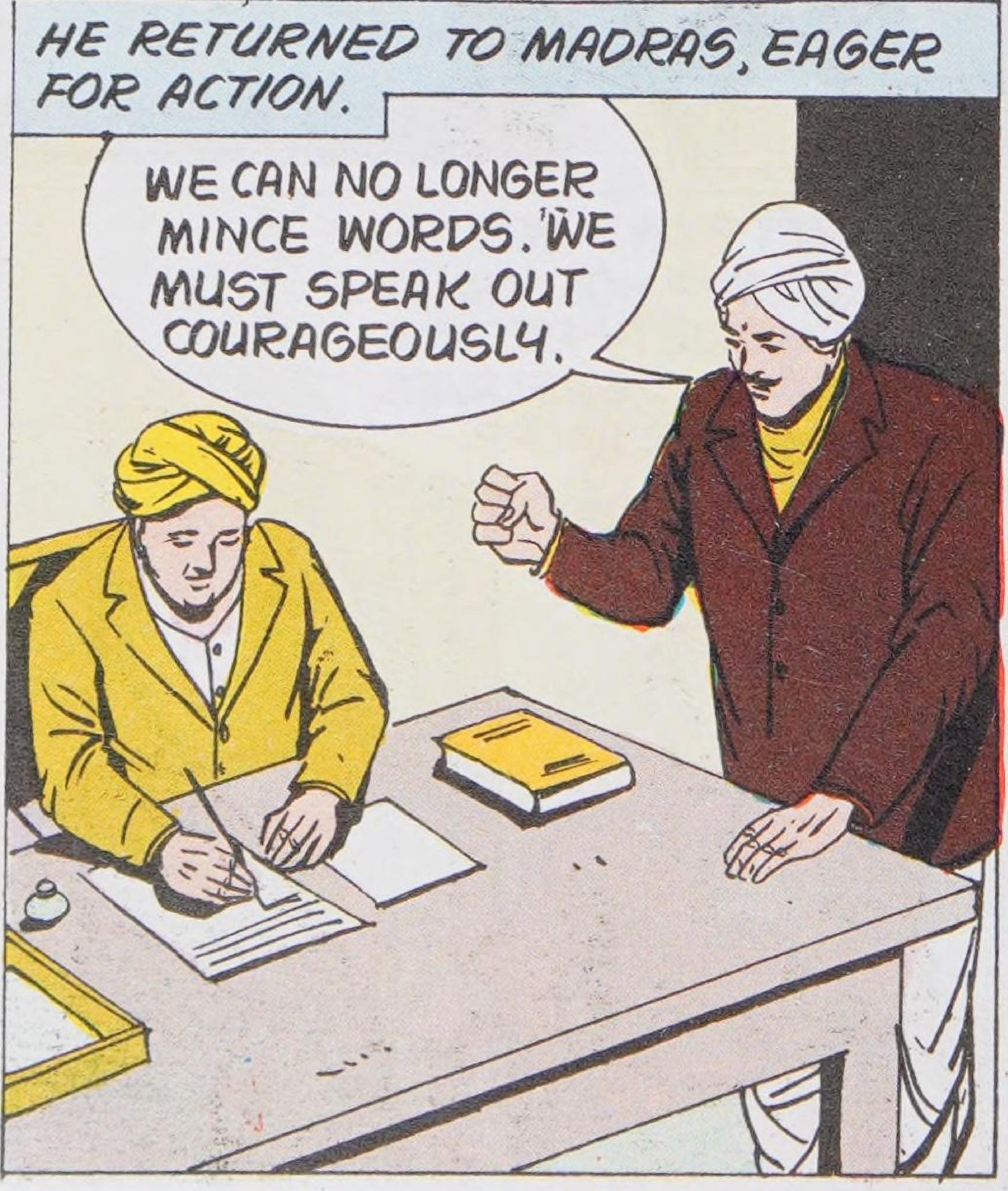

MR. IYER TOLD ME TO GIVE YOU SOME COFFEE.
OH, WHAT A CONSIDERATE MAN HE IS! AND I WAS ABOUT TO ASK HIM FOR A RAISE.

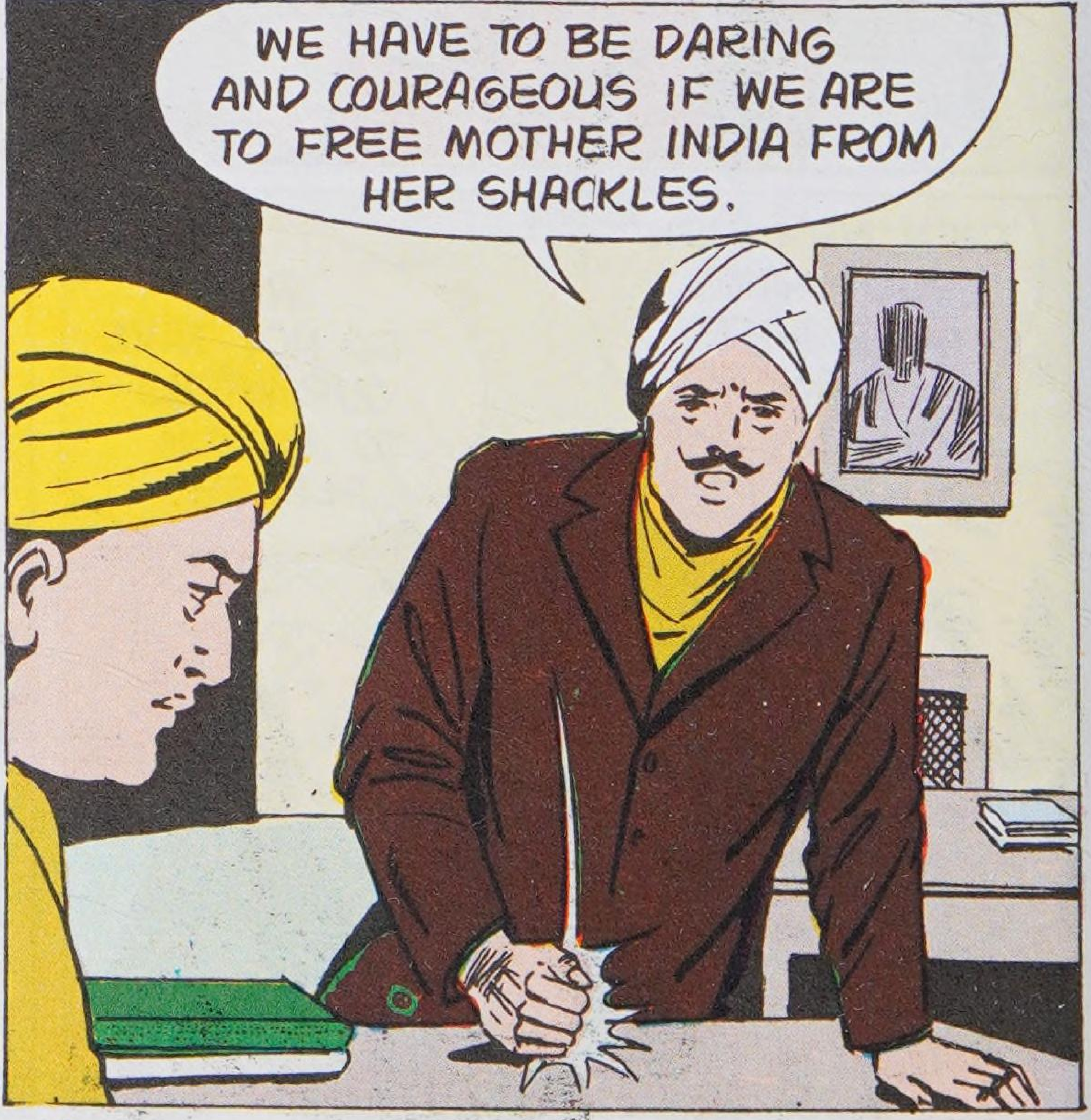

BHARATI'S WIDE READING MADE HIM POLITICALLY AWARE. IN 1905, SWADESHAMITRAN PUBLISHED HIS FIRST PATRIOTIC POEM 'HAIL BENGAL'. BUT WHEN HE TRIED TO WRITE POLITICAL EDITORIALS—
THIS IS TOO HARSH, BHARATI. SWADESHAMITRAN IS A MODERATE PAPER.
WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT WE PRINT.
SO BHARATI CONTENTED HIMSELF WITH WRITING ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS.
IN 1905 HE ATTENDED THE SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT VARANASI. ON HIS WAY BACK HE PASSED THROUGH CALCUTTA AND THERE HE MET SISTER NIVEDITA. SHE WAS A FIERY ADVOCATE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE.
ARE YOU MARRIED OR SINGLE?
I... I HAVE A WIFE AND DAUGHTER.
THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG?
WE DO NOT TAKE OUR WIVES TO PUBLIC PLACES.
YOU DON'T? AND YOU TALK OF FREEDOM? HOW CAN ONE HALF OF SOCIETY BECOME FREE WHILE IT ENSLAVES THE OTHER HALF?

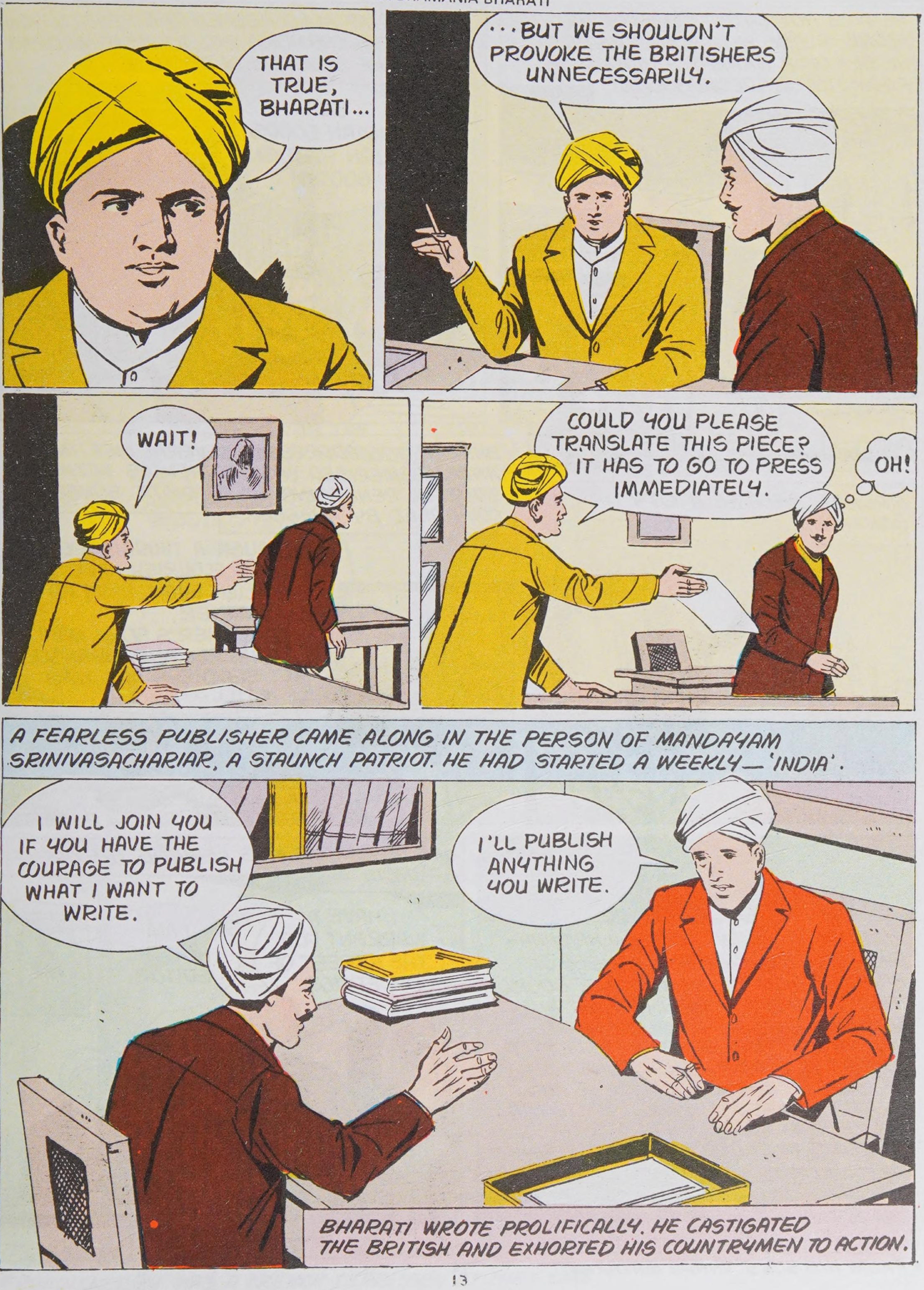

DO NOT THINK OF YOUR WIFE AS SOMEONE APART FROM YOU. CONSIDER HER AS YOUR RIGHT HAND AND LOVE HER WITH ALL YOUR HEART.
I-I SHALL DO AS YOU ADVISE.


MOTHER INDIA IS IN CHAINS... AND IS SUFFERING AS A SLAVE! HER CHILDREN MUST BECOME COURAGEOUS.

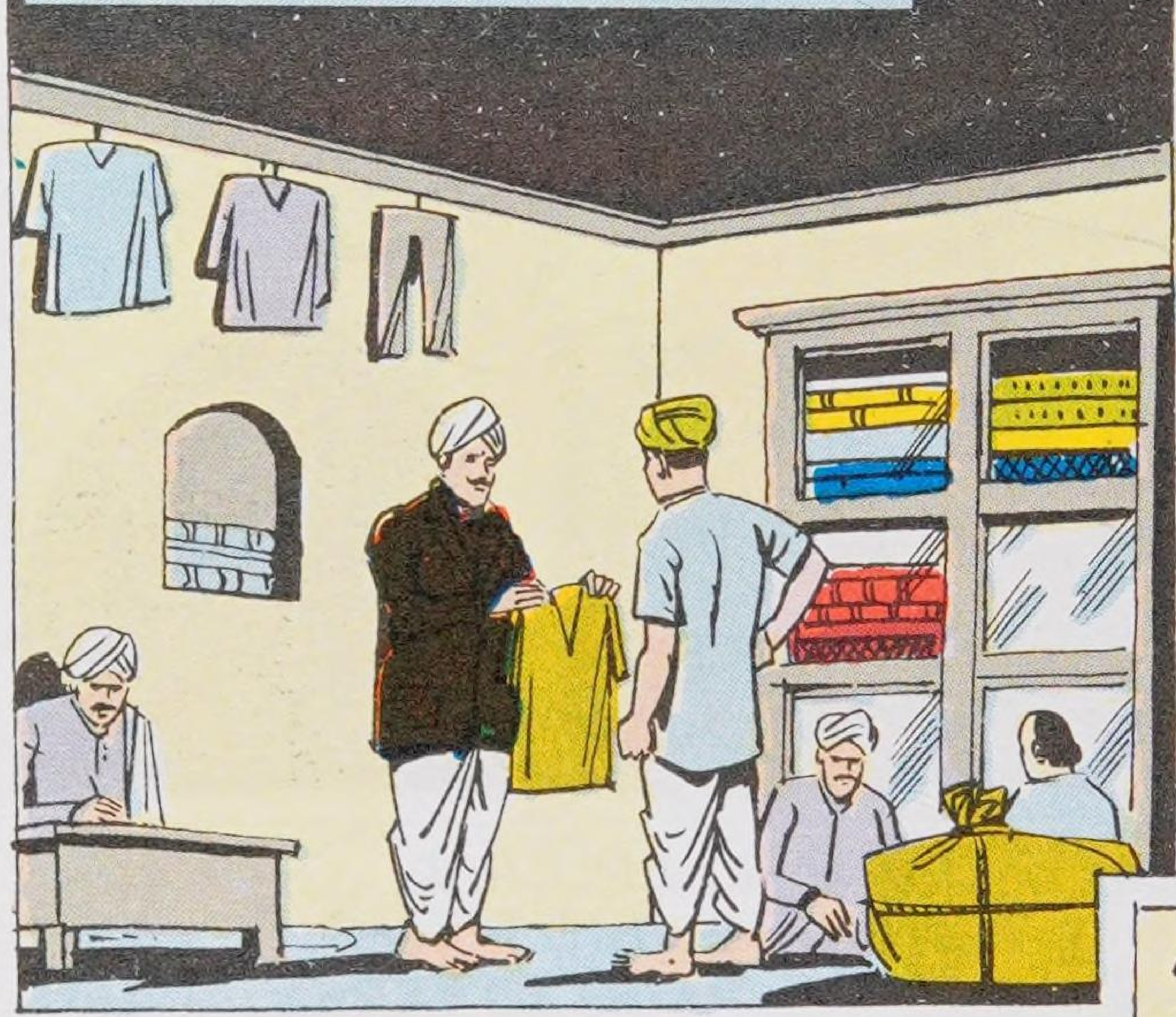

BHARATI LEFT THE PRESENCE OF SISTER NIVEDITA IN A DAZE.
MY MOTHER IS IN CHAINS... I MUST FREE HER FROM SLAVERY.


HE RETURNED TO MADRAS, EAGER FOR ACTION.
WE CAN NO LONGER MINCE WORDS. WE MUST SPEAK OUT COURAGEOUSLY.

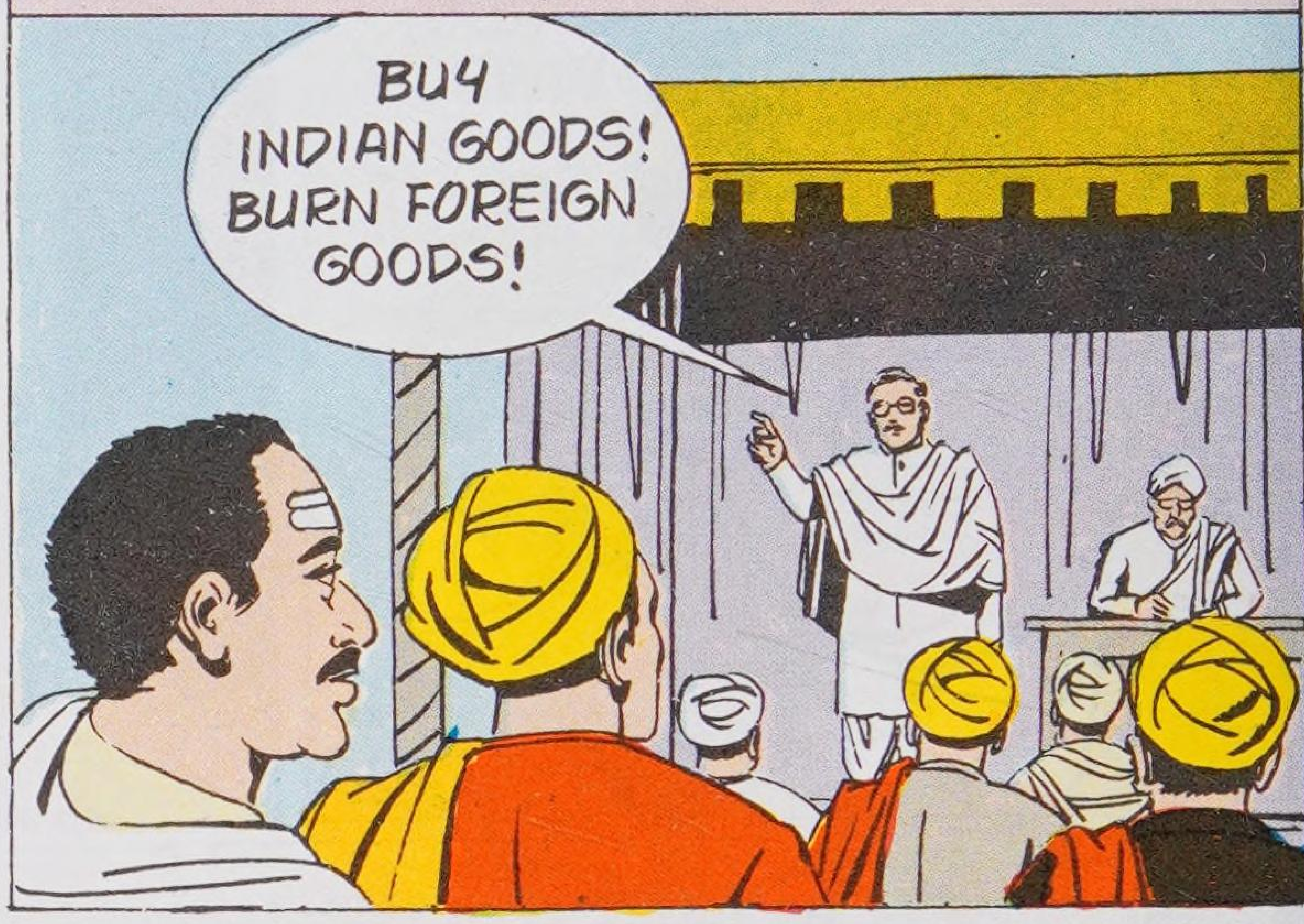

WE HAVE TO BE DARING AND COURAGEOUS IF WE ARE TO FREE MOTHER INDIA FROM HER SHACKLES.


THAT IS TRUE, BHARATI...
...BUT WE SHOULDN'T PROVOKE THE BRITISHERS UNNECESSARILY.
WAIT!
COULD YOU PLEASE TRANSLATE THIS PIECE? IT HAS TO GO TO PRESS IMMEDIATELY.
OH!
A FEARLESS PUBLISHER CAME ALONG IN THE PERSON OF MANDAYAM SRINIVASACHARIAR, A STAUNCH PATRIOT. HE HAD STARTED A WEEKLY—'INDIA'.
I WILL JOIN YOU IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO PUBLISH WHAT I WANT TO WRITE.
I'LL PUBLISH ANYTHING YOU WRITE.
BHARATI WROTE PROLIFICALLY. HE CASTIGATED THE BRITISH AND EXHORTED HIS COUNTRYMEN TO ACTION.

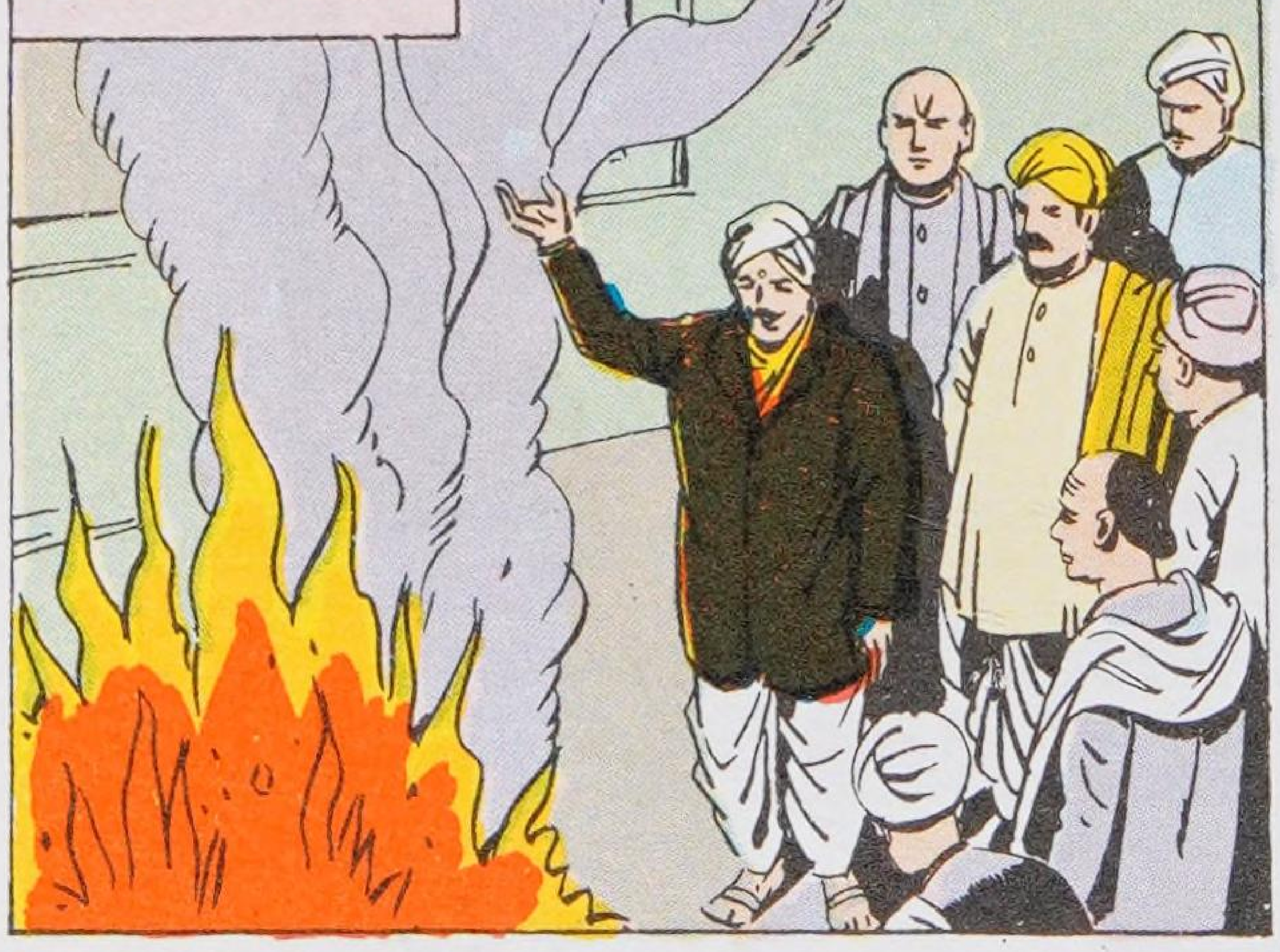
HE WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH WRITING ALONE, ALONG WITH SOME FRIENDS HE SET UP A BHARAT BHANDAR TO PROMOTE 'SWADESHI' GOODS!



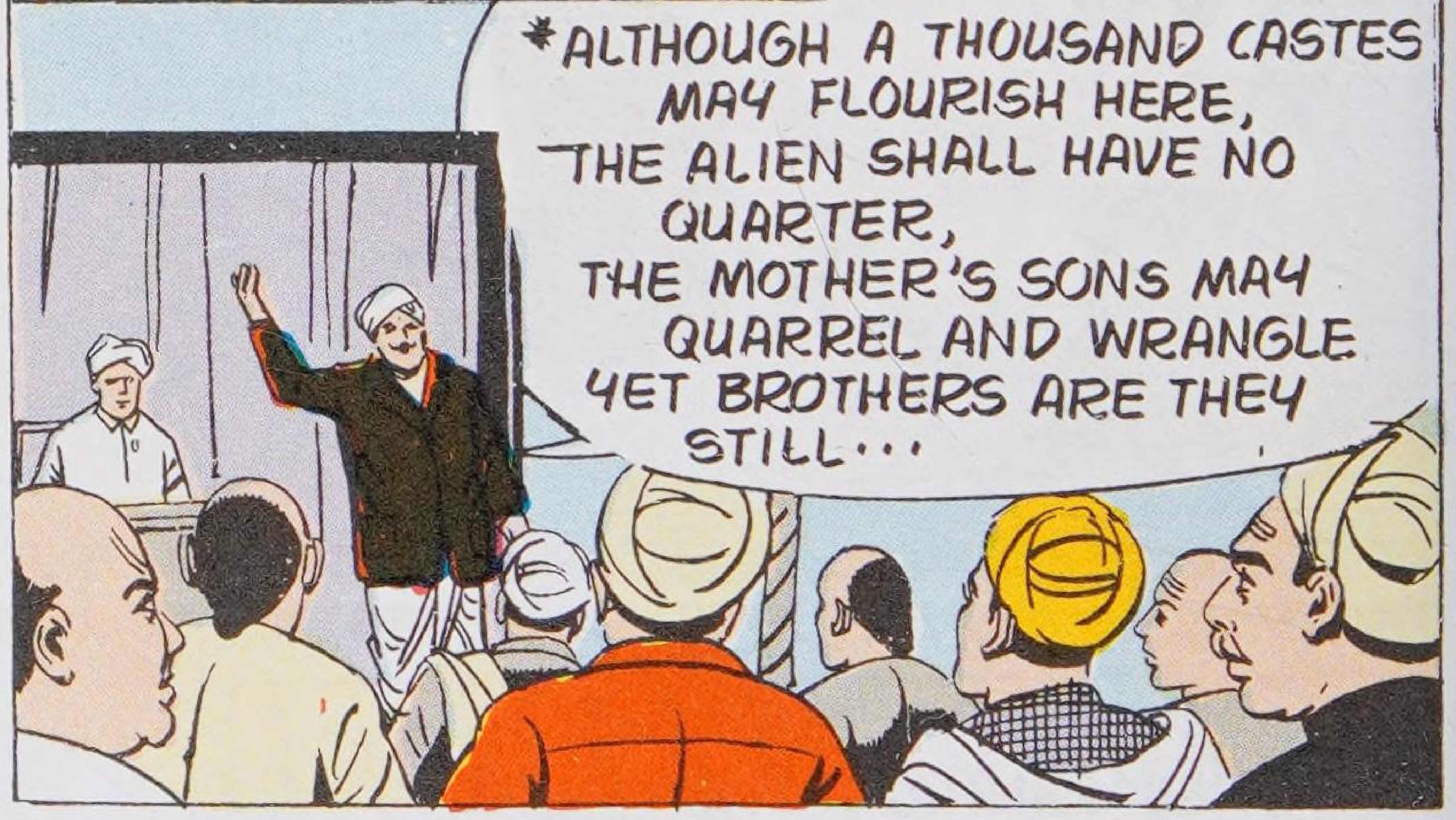
THE GROUP ALSO HELPED THE REVOLUTIONARY, BIPIN CHANDRA PAL, TO VISIT MADRAS AND MAKE SEVERAL SPEECHES.


BUY INDIAN GOODS! BURN FOREIGN GOODS!

MADRAS BECAME A CITY OF BONFIRES.

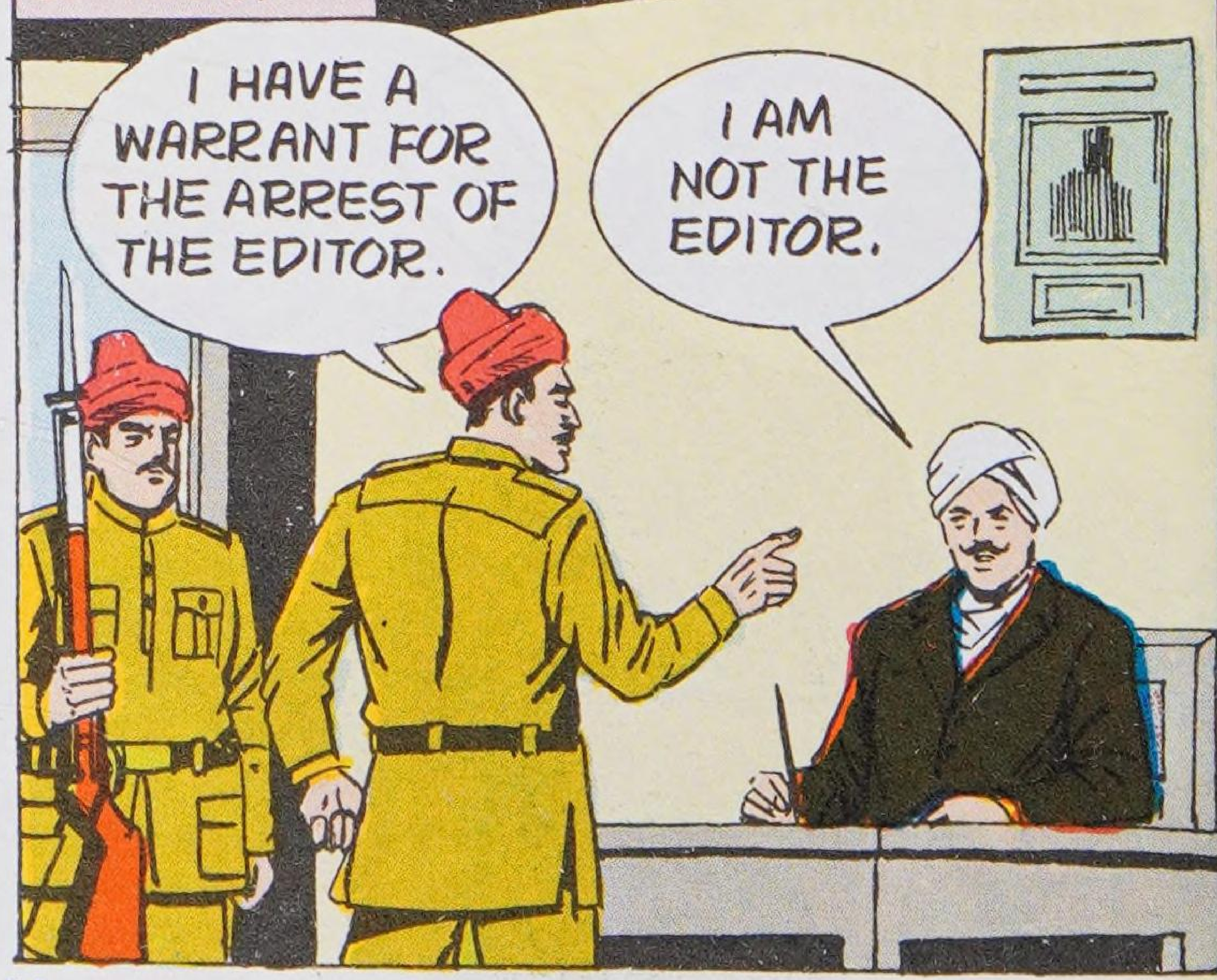


BHARATI, TOO, ADDRESSED SEVERAL MEETINGS AND MESMERISED VAST AUDIENCES WITH HIS SOULFUL RENDERING OF PATRIOTIC SONGS COMPOSED BY HIMSELF.


*ALTHOUGH A THOUSAND CASTES MAY FLOURISH HERE, THE ALIEN SHALL HAVE NO QUARTER, THE MOTHER'S SONS MAY QUARREL AND WRANGLE YET BROTHERS ARE THEY STILL...

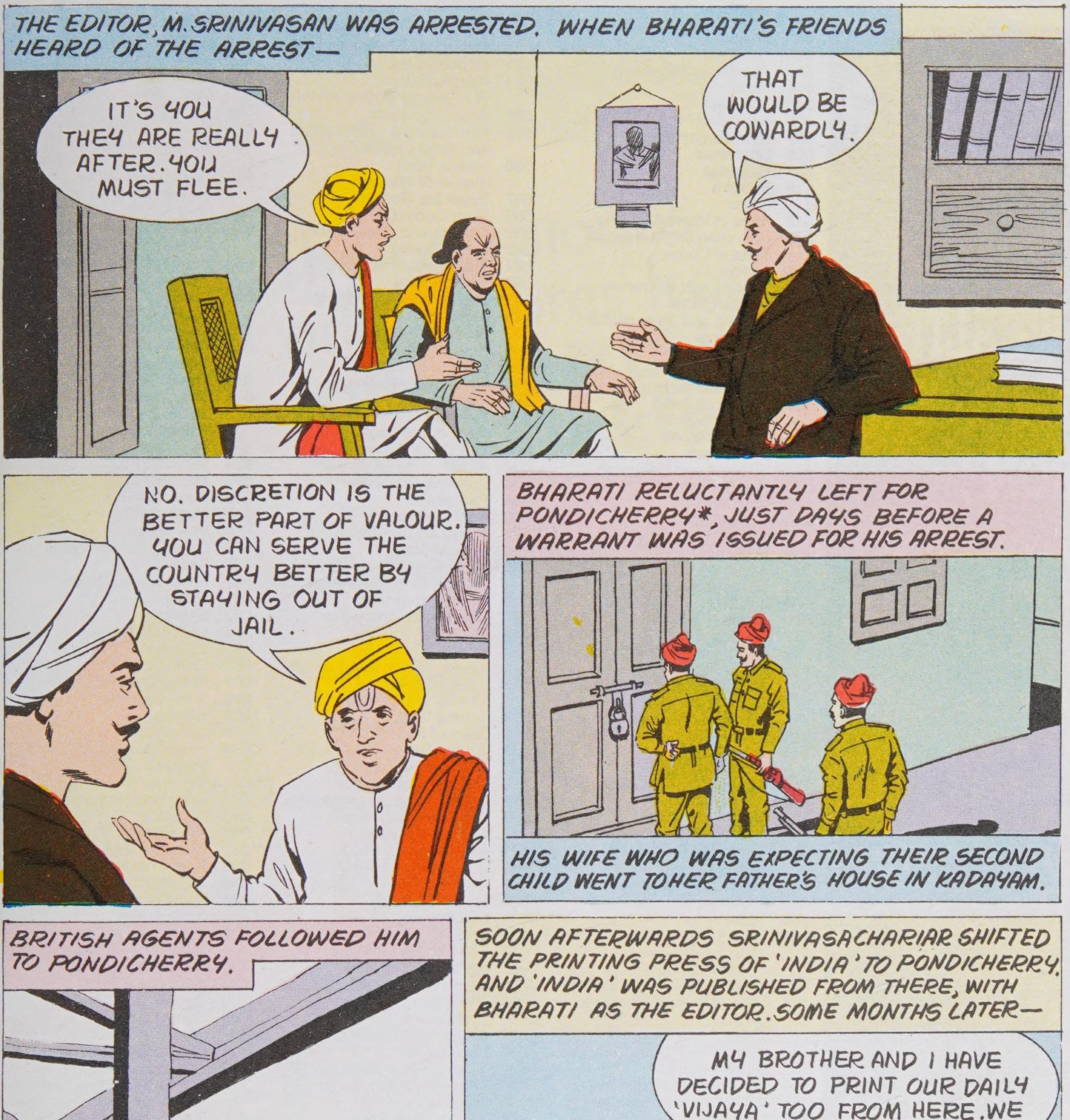
IN 1907, A PROMINENT CITIZEN, V. KRISHNASWAMY IYER, PUBLISHED THREE OF BHARATI'S SONGS IN A SINGLE BOOKLET. THE FOLLOWING YEAR THE POET HIMSELF PUBLISHED AN ANTHOLOGY OF HIS PATRIOTIC POEMS, WHICH HE DEDICATED TO SISTER NIVEDITA. THE SONGS WERE WRITTEN IN SIMPLE LANGUAGE AND WERE A GREAT HIT. SOON IT BECAME A CUSTOM FOR ALL POLITICAL MEETINGS TO BEGIN WITH ONE OF BHARATI'S SONGS.

ONE DAY AS HE WAS LEAVING THE OFFICES OF 'INDIA'—


I HAVE A WARRANT FOR THE ARREST OF THE EDITOR.
I AM NOT THE EDITOR.

---

*FROM HIS SONG 'VANDE MATARAM'


THE EDITOR, M. SRINIVASAN WAS ARRESTED. WHEN BHARATI'S FRIENDS HEARD OF THE ARREST—
IT'S YOU THEY ARE REALLY AFTER. YOU MUST FLEE.
THAT WOULD BE COWARDLY.
NO. DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR. YOU CAN SERVE THE COUNTRY BETTER BY STAYING OUT OF JAIL.
BHARATI RELUCTANTLY LEFT FOR PONDICHERRY*, JUST DAYS BEFORE A WARRANT WAS ISSUED FOR HIS ARREST.
HIS WIFE WHO WAS EXPECTING THEIR SECOND CHILD WENT TO HER FATHER'S HOUSE IN KADAYAM.
BRITISH AGENTS FOLLOWED HIM TO PONDICHERRY.
SOON AFTERWARDS SRINIVASACHARIAR SHIFTED THE PRINTING PRESS OF 'INDIA' TO PONDICHERRY. AND 'INDIA' WAS PUBLISHED FROM THERE, WITH BHARATI AS THE EDITOR. SOME MONTHS LATER—
MY BROTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED TO PRINT OUR DAILY 'VIJAYA' TOO FROM HERE. WE WANT YOU TO EDIT IT.

---

*PONDICHERRY WAS A FRENCH TERRITORY AT THAT TIME.

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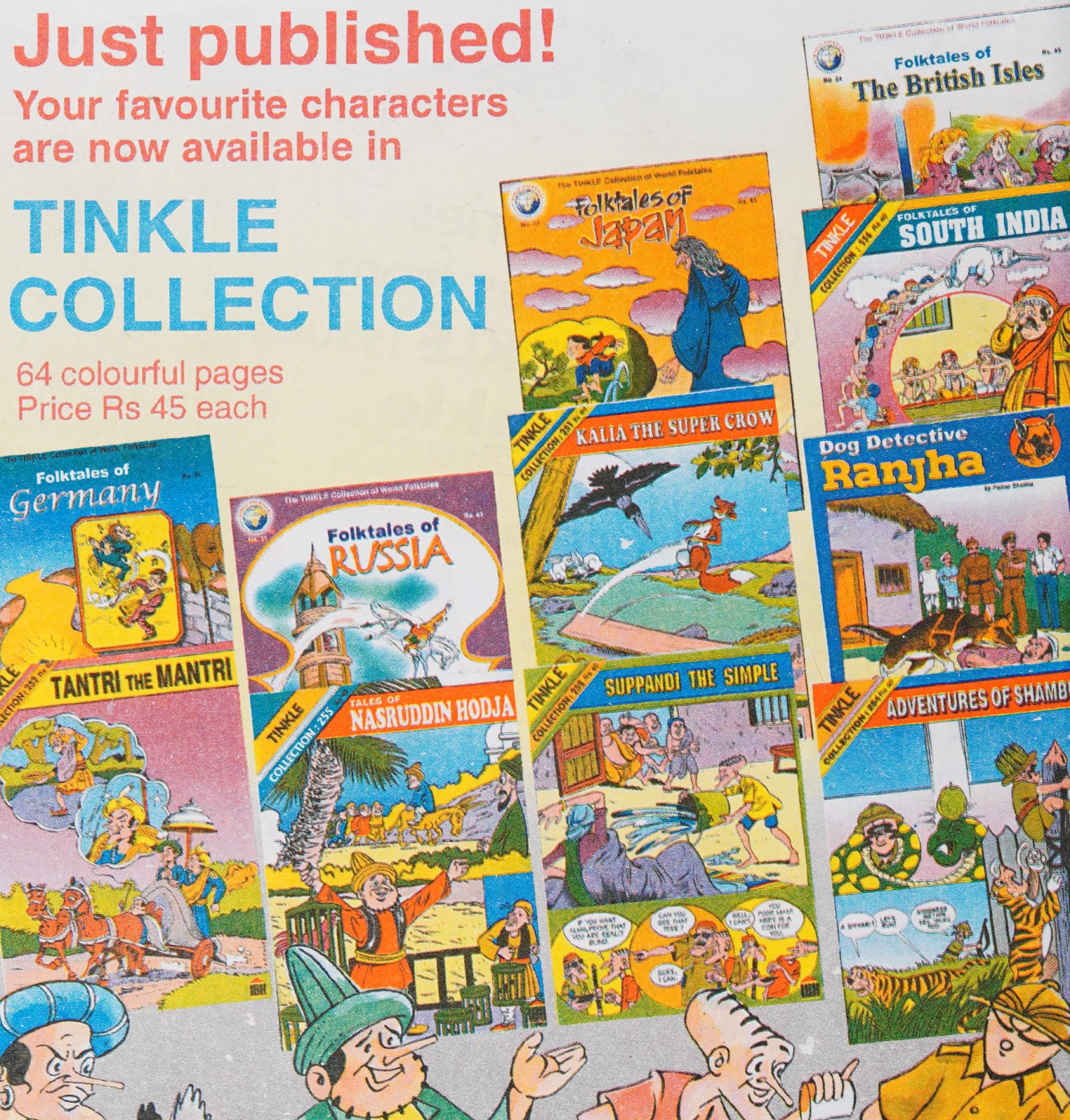
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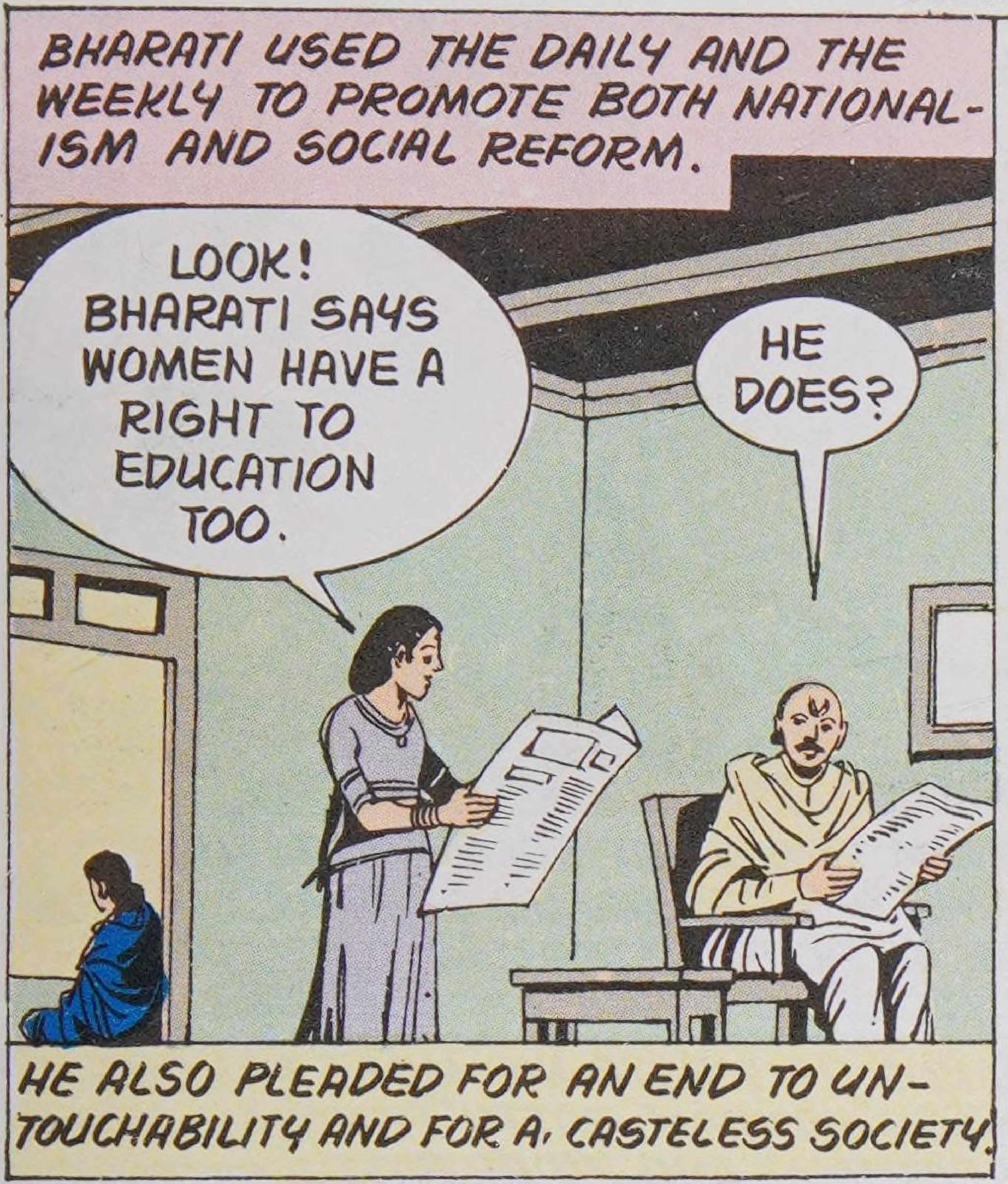
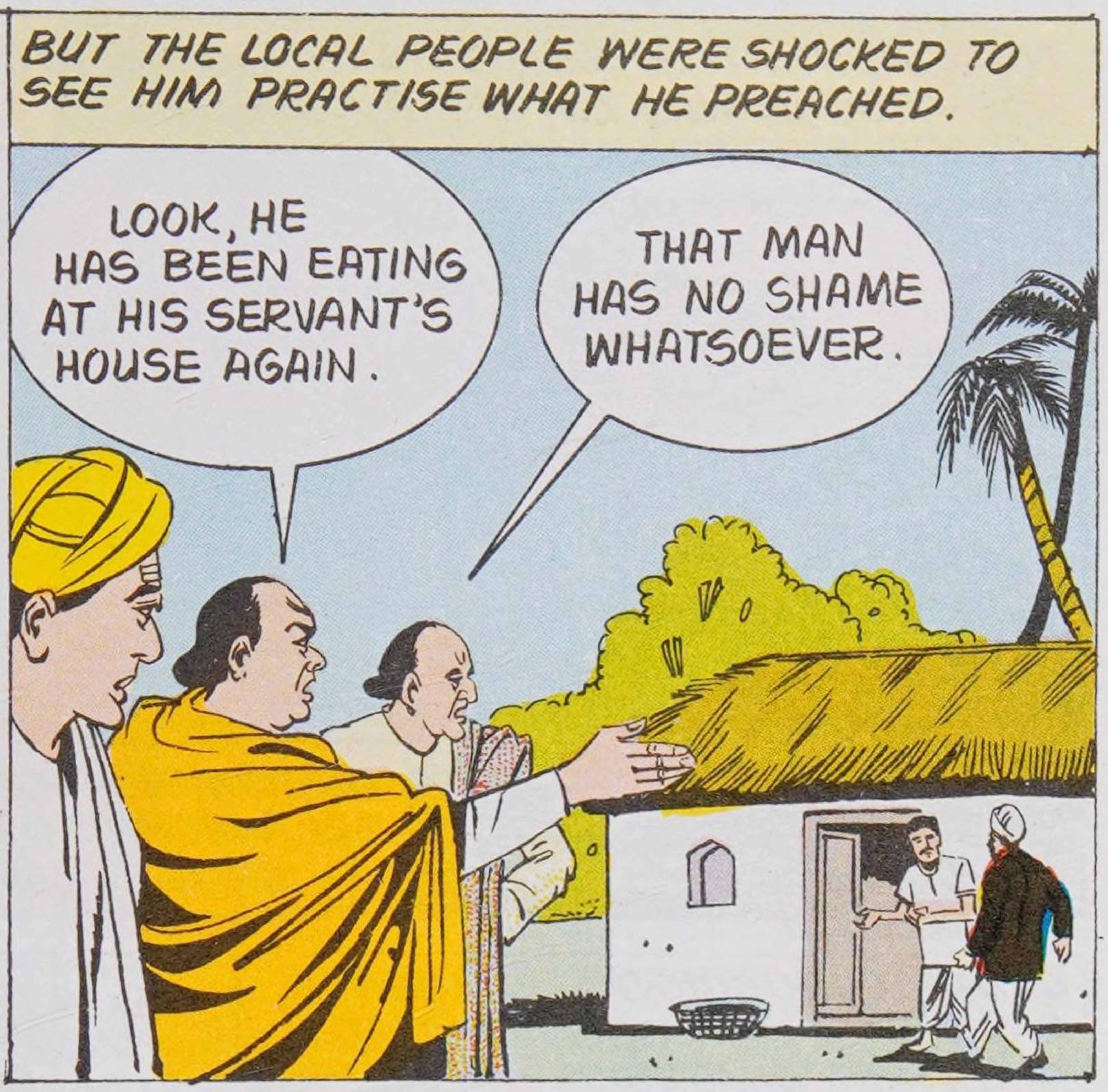
BHARATI USED THE DAILY AND THE WEEKLY TO PROMOTE BOTH NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM.

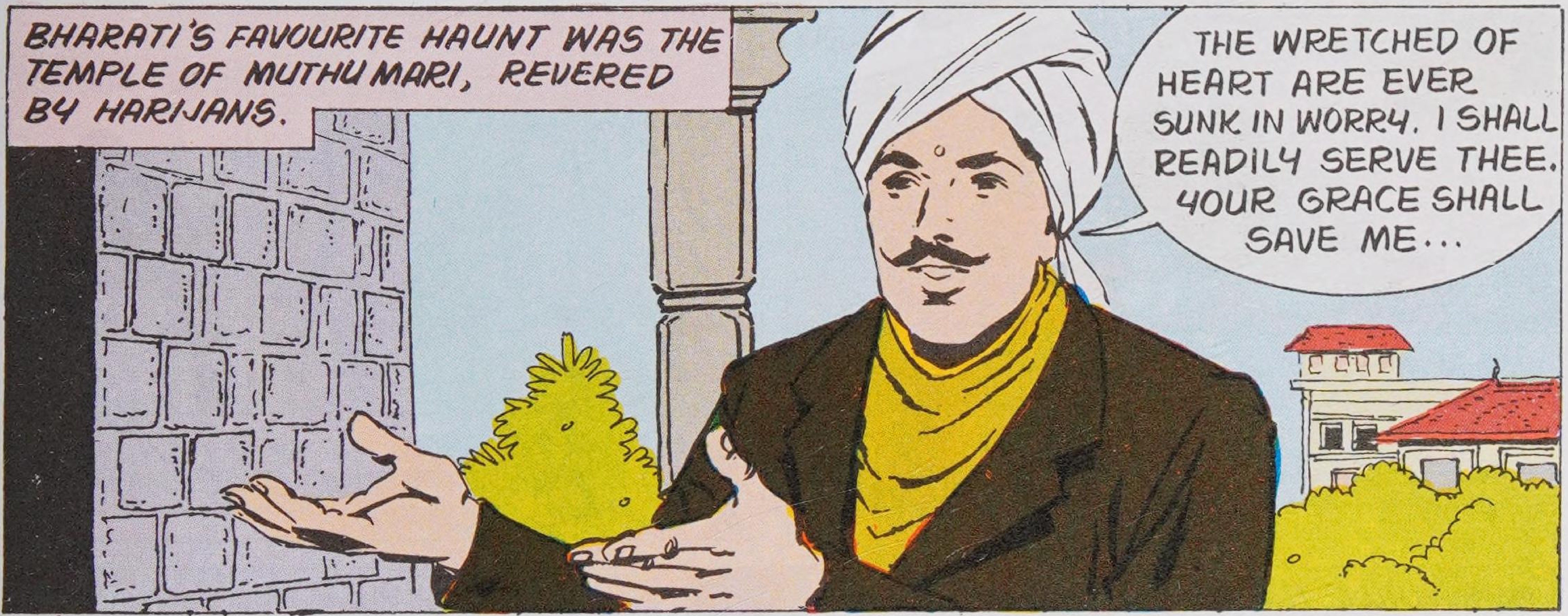

LOOK! BHARATI SAYS WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO EDUCATION TOO.
HE DOES?

HE ALSO PLEADED FOR AN END TO UNTOUCHABILITY AND FOR A CASTELESS SOCIETY.

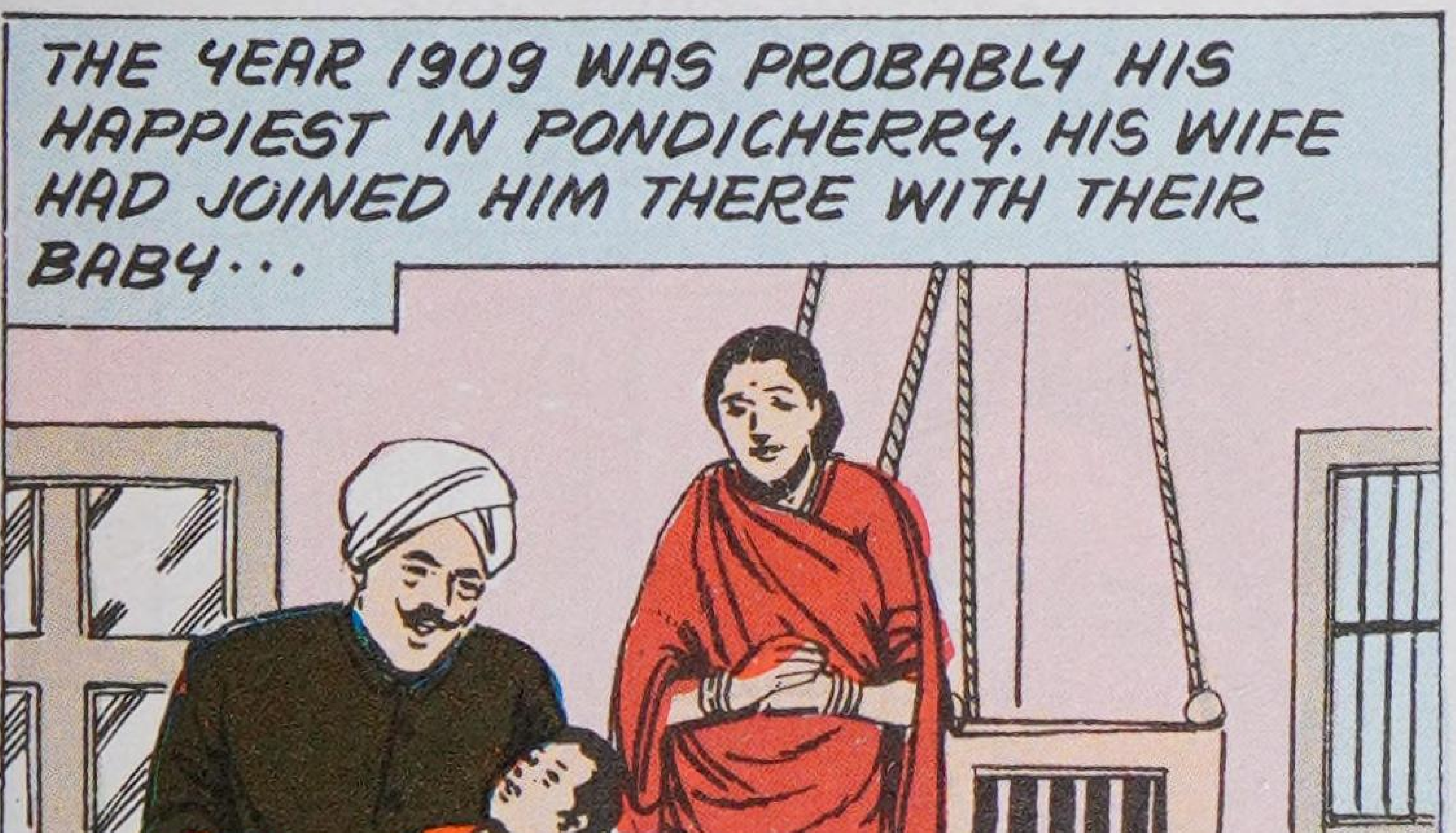
BUT THE LOCAL PEOPLE WERE SHOCKED TO SEE HIM PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED.


LOOK, HE HAS BEEN EATING AT HIS SERVANT'S HOUSE AGAIN.
THAT MAN HAS NO SHAME WHATSOEVER.

BHARATI'S FAVOURITE HAUNT WAS THE TEMPLE OF MUTHU MARI, REVERED BY HARIJANS.

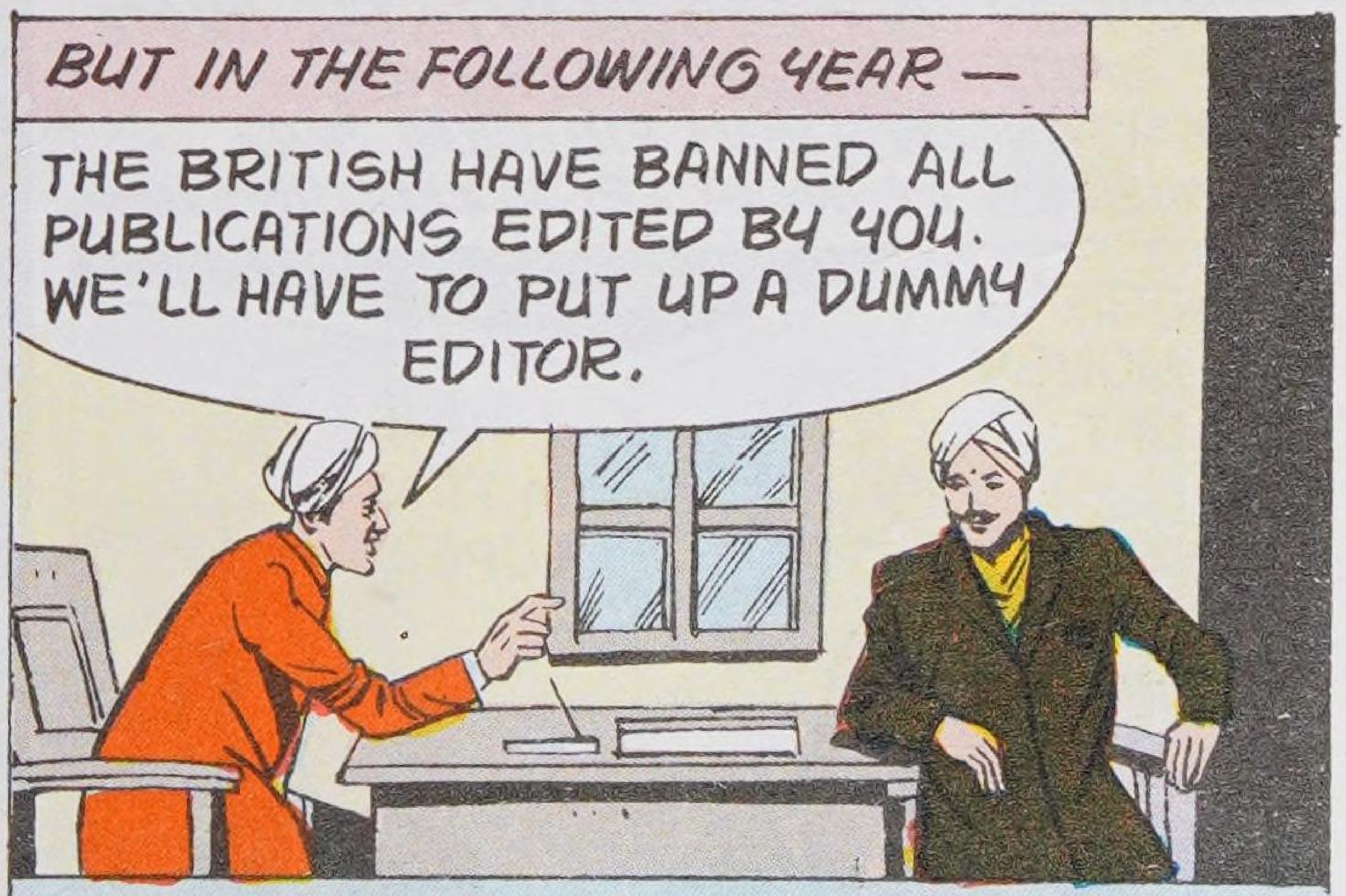

THE WRETCHED OF HEART ARE EVER SUNK IN WORRY. I SHALL READILY SERVE THEE. YOUR GRACE SHALL SAVE ME...

THE YEAR 1909 WAS PROBABLY HIS HAPPIEST IN PONDICHERRY. HIS WIFE HAD JOINED HIM THERE WITH THEIR BABY...

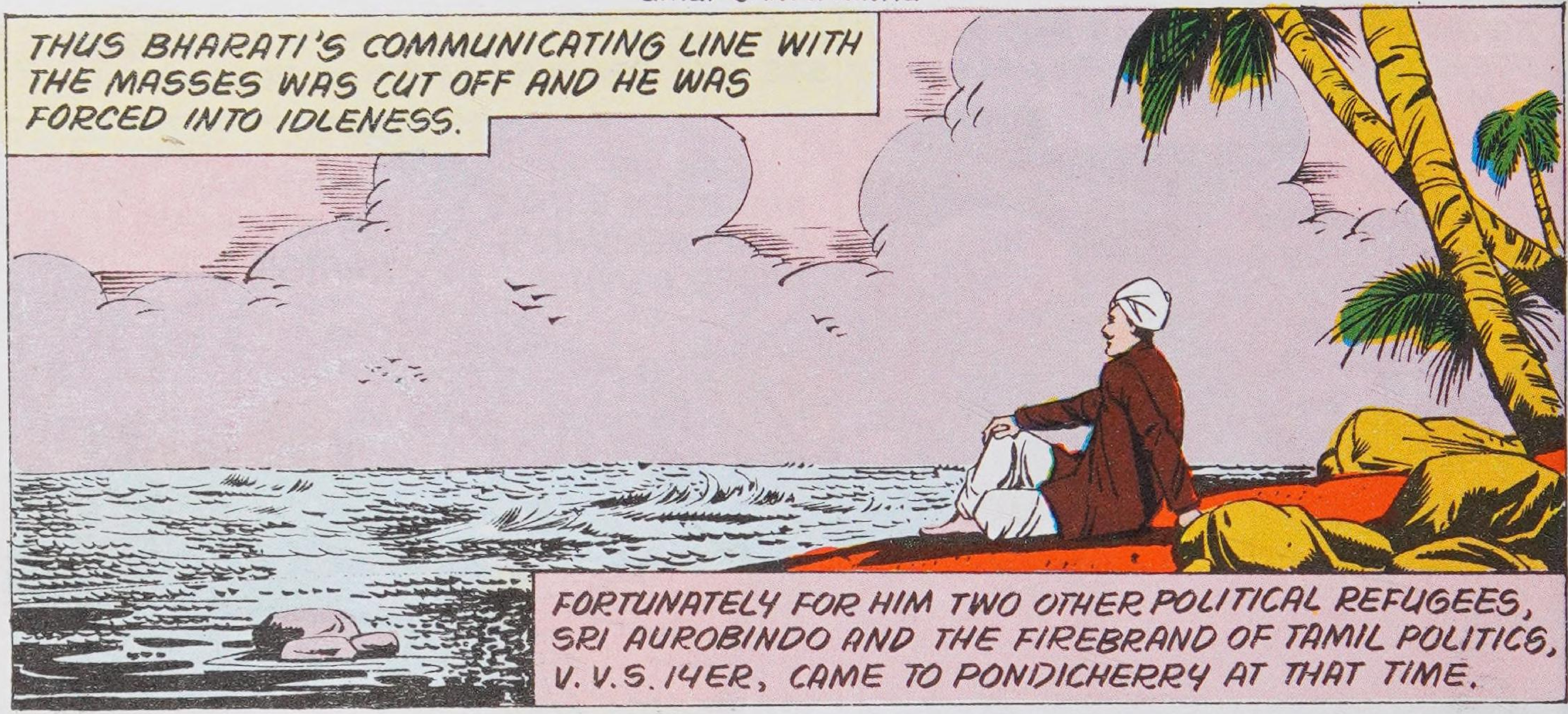


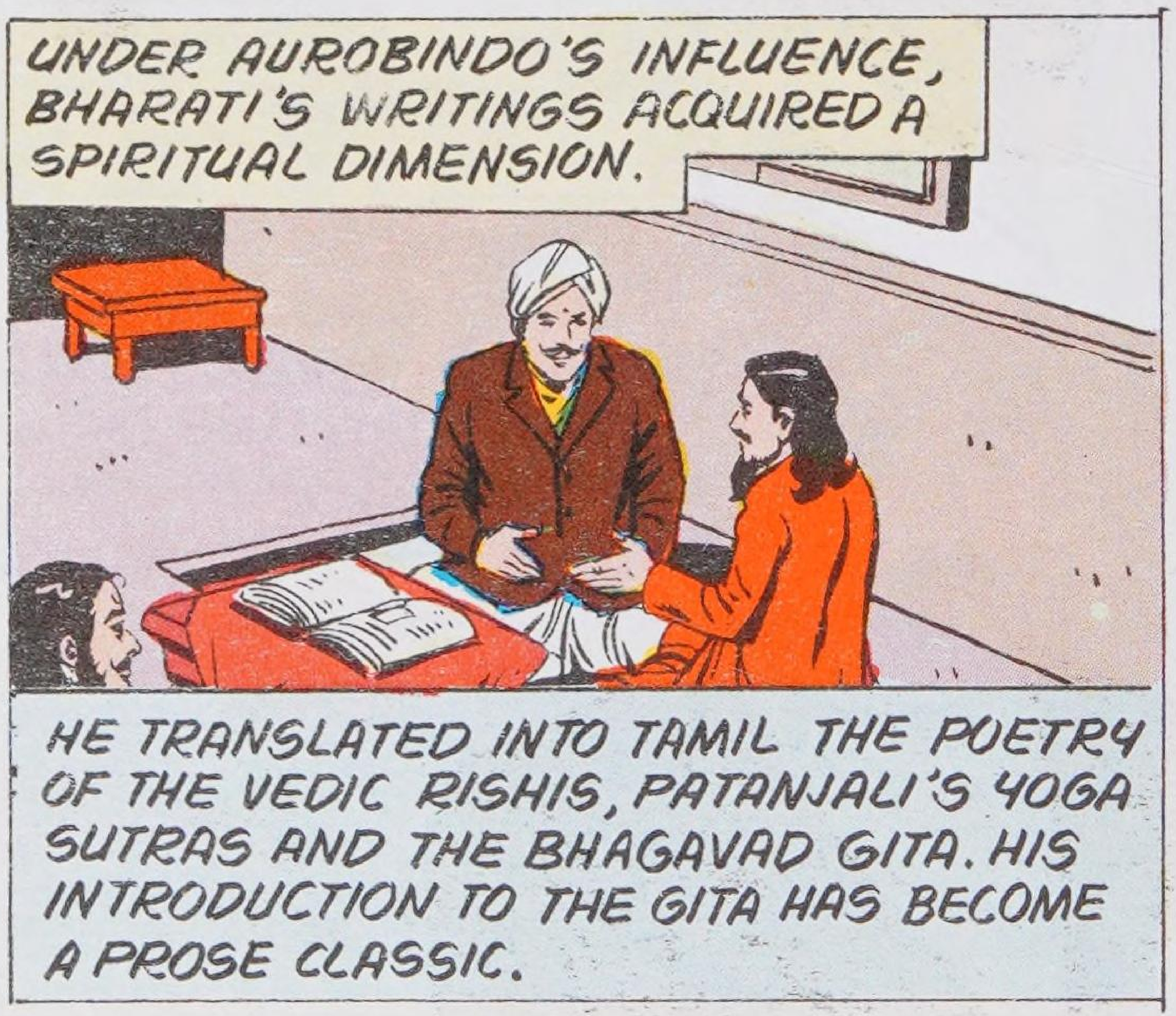
...AND HE PUBLISHED A VOLUME OF HIS SONGS ENTITLED 'JANMA BHOOMI'.

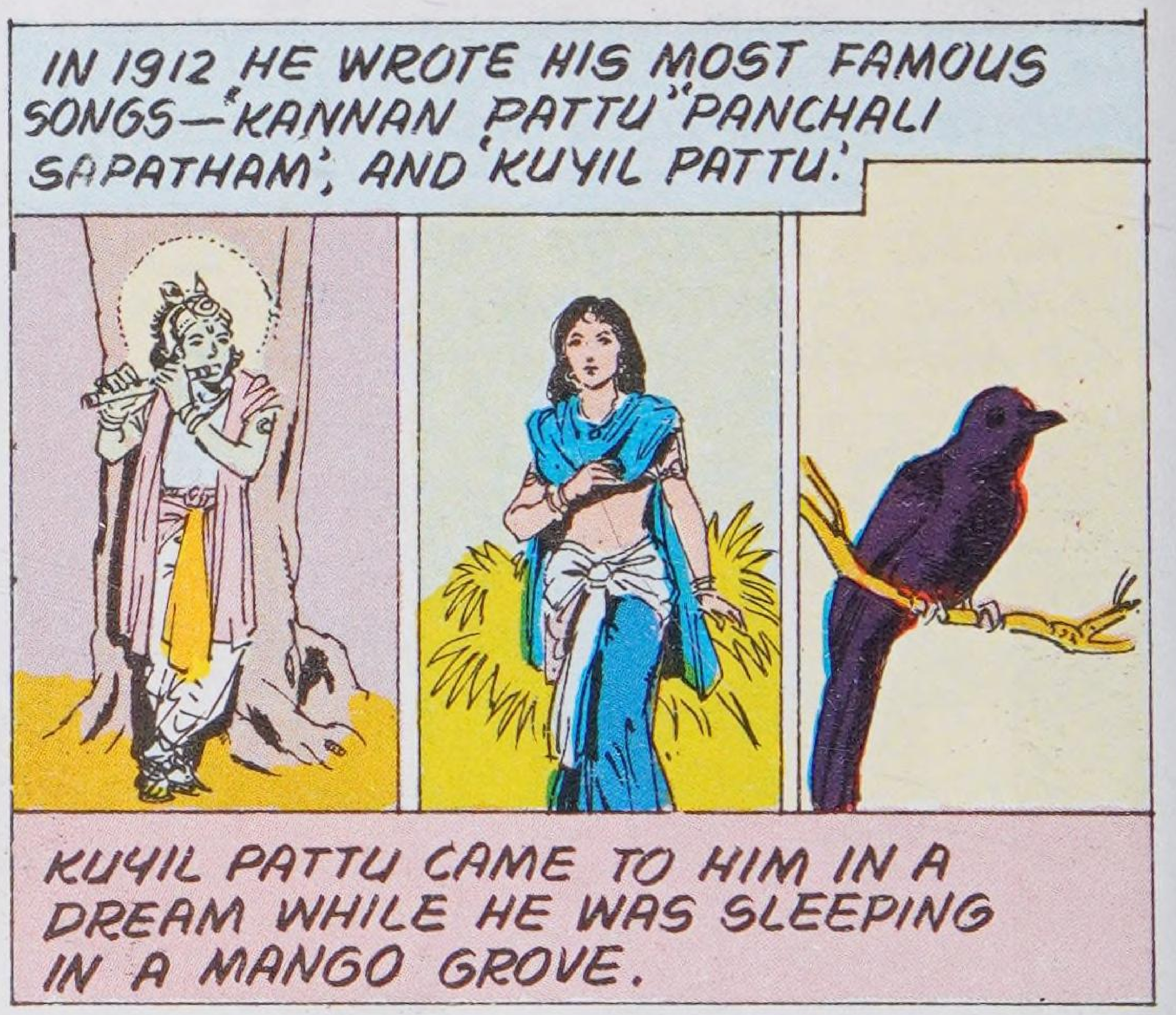
BUT IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR —

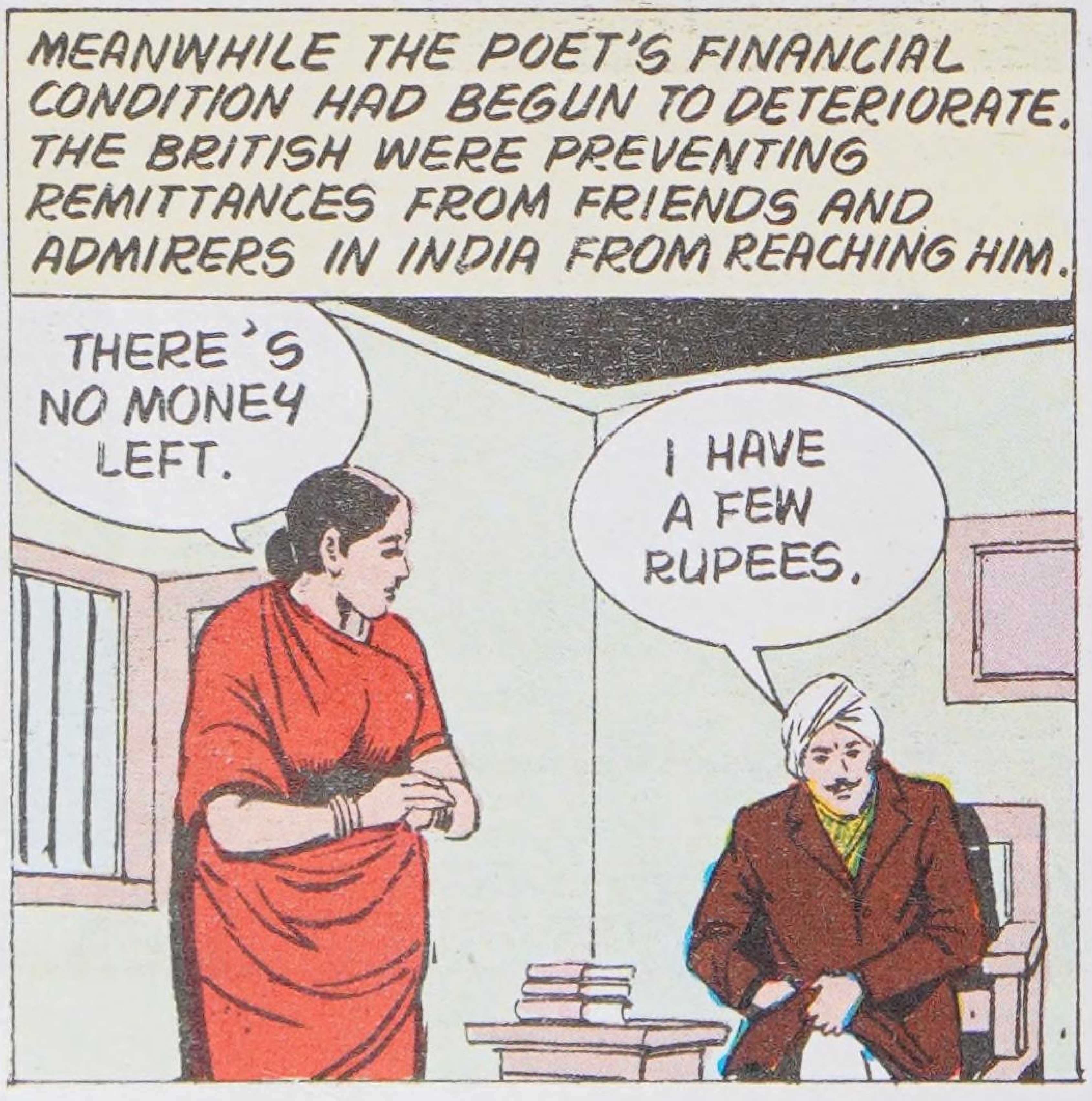

THE BRITISH HAVE BANNED ALL PUBLICATIONS EDITED BY YOU. WE'LL HAVE TO PUT UP A DUMMY EDITOR.

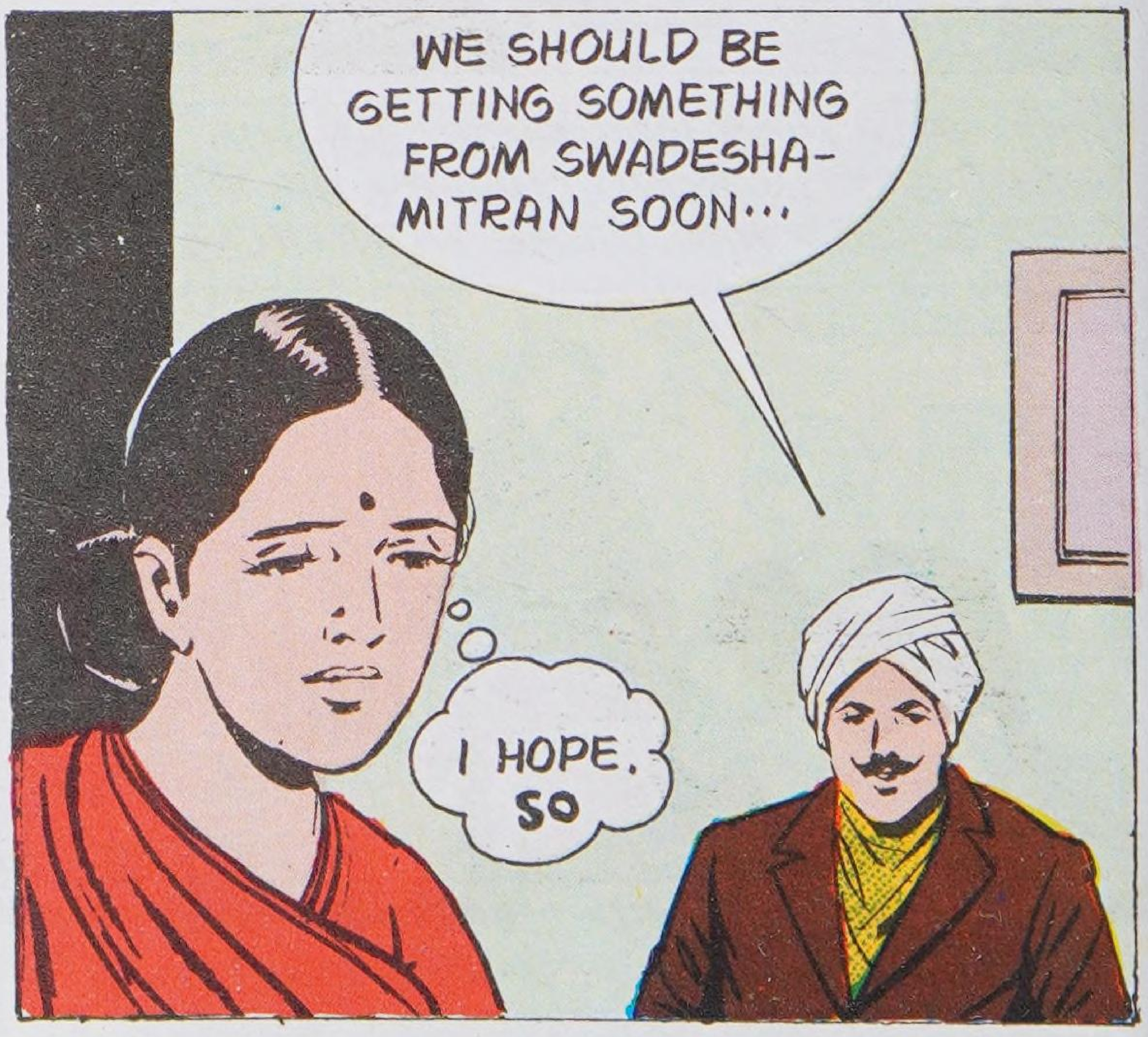
BHARATI'S NAME AS EDITOR WAS TAKEN OFF. BUT THE BRITISH WERE NOT FOOLED. 'INDIA' HAD TO CLOSE DOWN WITH THE ISSUE OF MARCH 12, 1910.

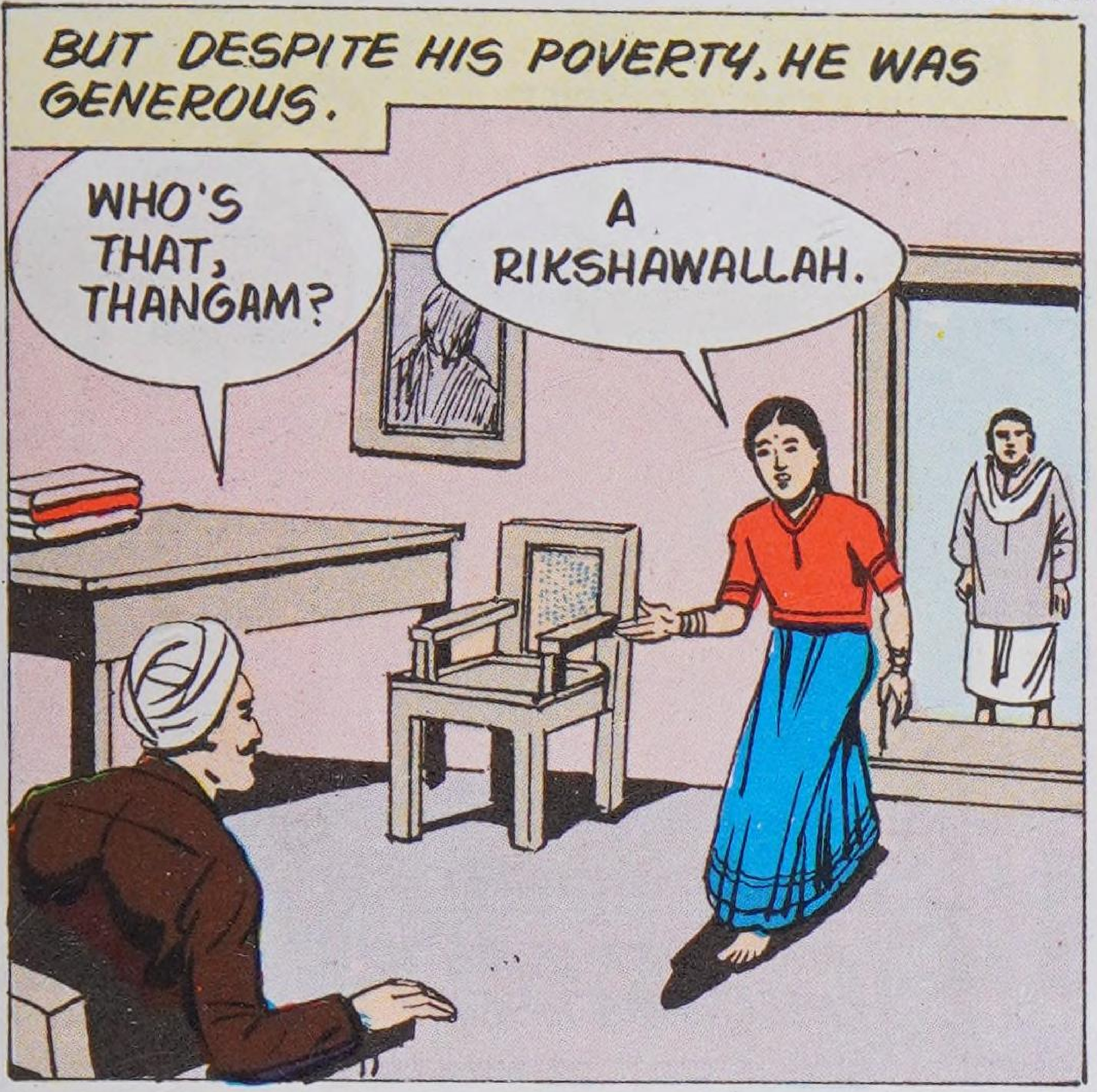

THUS BHARATI'S COMMUNICATING LINE WITH THE MASSES WAS CUT OFF AND HE WAS FORCED INTO IDLENESS.
FORTUNATELY FOR HIM TWO OTHER POLITICAL REFUGEES, SRI AUROBINDO AND THE FIREBRAND OF TAMIL POLITICS, V.V.S. IYER, CAME TO PONDICHERRY AT THAT TIME.

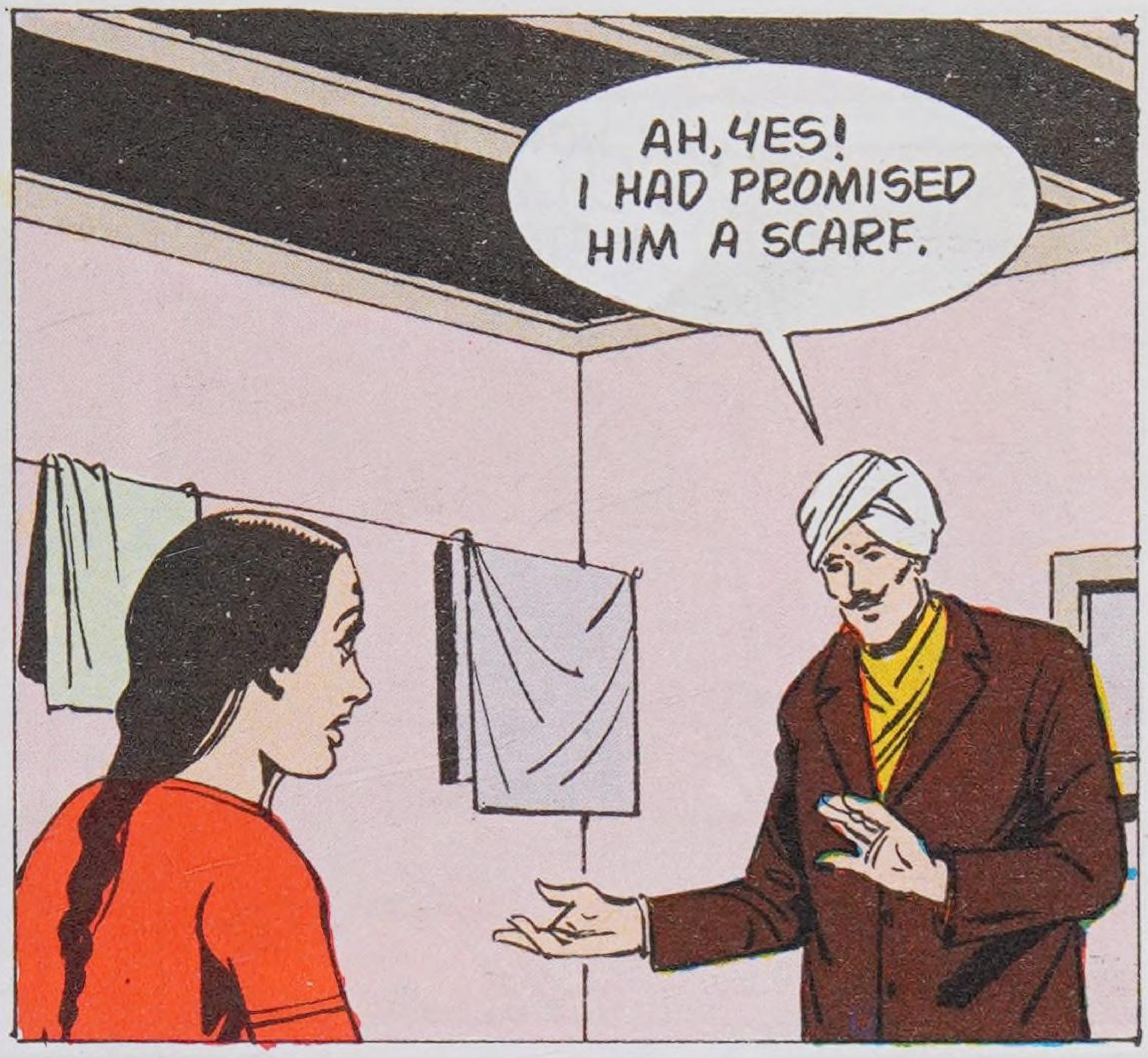

UNDER AUROBINDO'S INFLUENCE, BHARATI'S WRITINGS ACQUIRED A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION.
HE TRANSLATED INTO TAMIL THE POETRY OF THE VEDIC RISHIS, PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS AND THE BHAGAVAD GITA. HIS INTRODUCTION TO THE GITA HAS BECOME A PROSE CLASSIC.

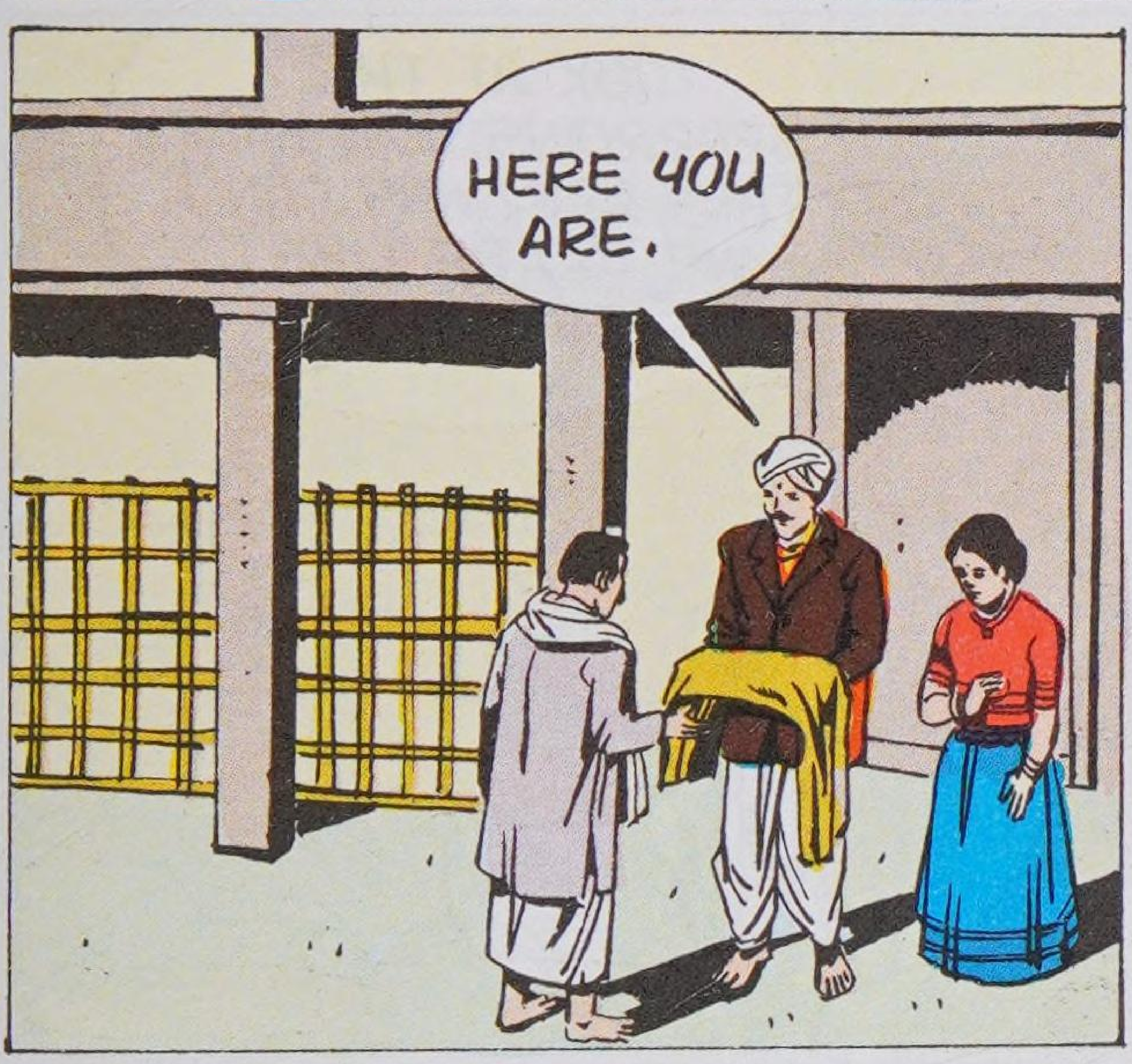

IN 1912 HE WROTE HIS MOST FAMOUS SONGS—'KANNAN PATTU' 'PANCHALI SAPATHAM', AND 'KUYIL PATTU.'
KUYIL PATTU CAME TO HIM IN A DREAM WHILE HE WAS SLEEPING IN A MANGO GROVE.

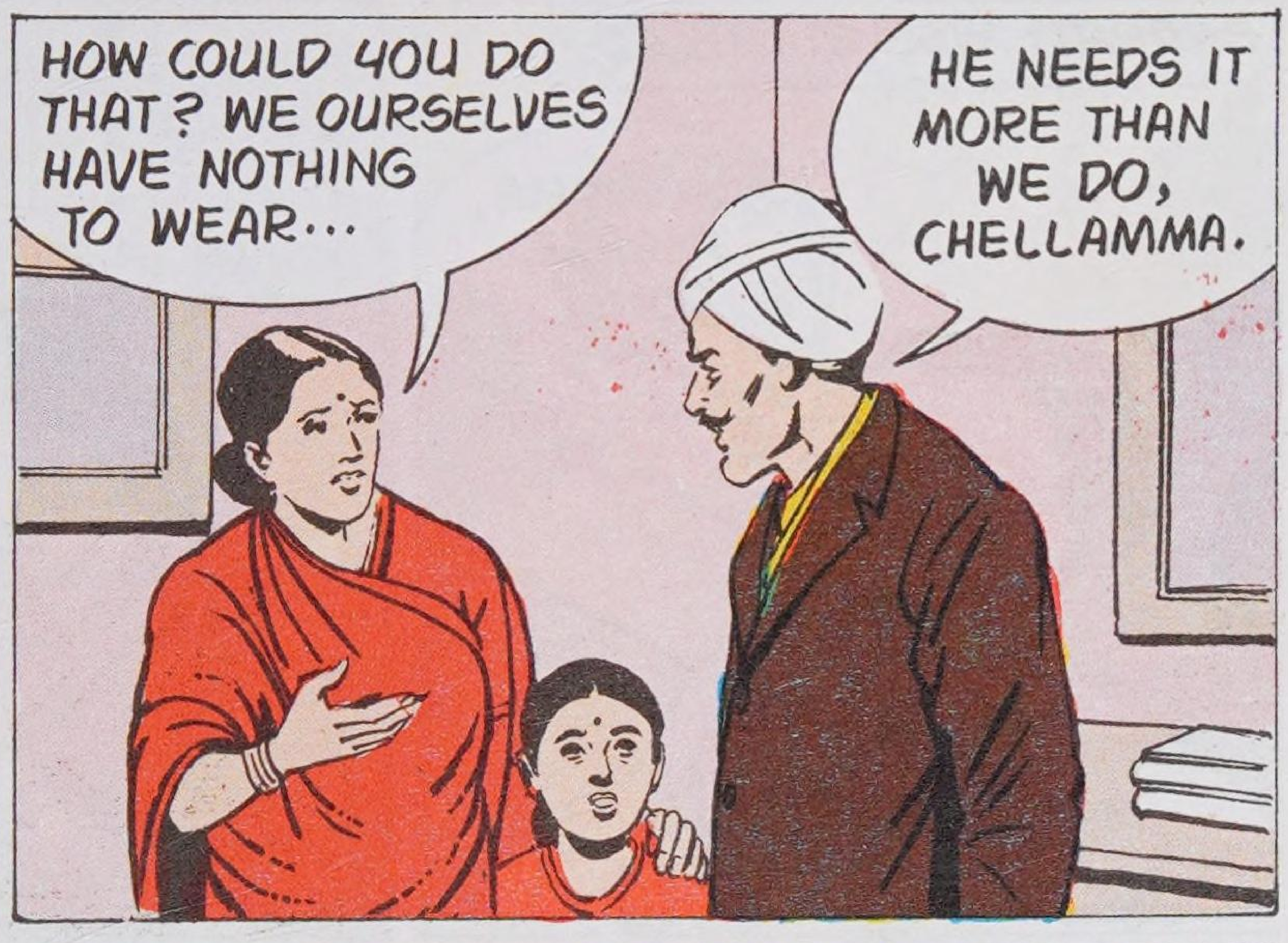

MEANWHILE THE POET'S FINANCIAL CONDITION HAD BEGUN TO DETERIORATE. THE BRITISH WERE PREVENTING REMITTANCES FROM FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS IN INDIA FROM REACHING HIM.
THERE'S NO MONEY LEFT.
I HAVE A FEW RUPEES.

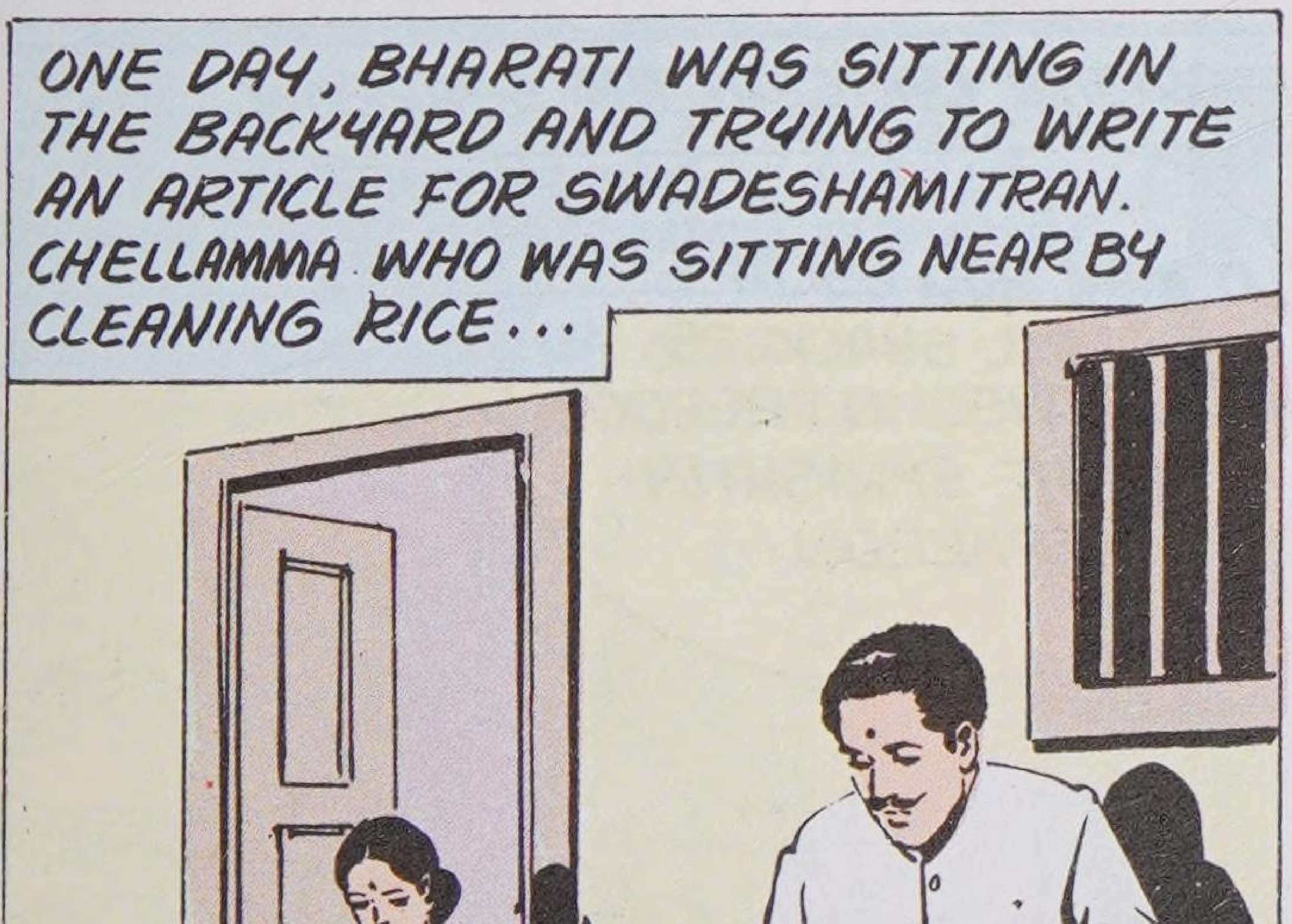

WE SHOULD BE GETTING SOMETHING FROM SWADESHA-MITRAN SOON...
I HOPE SO.

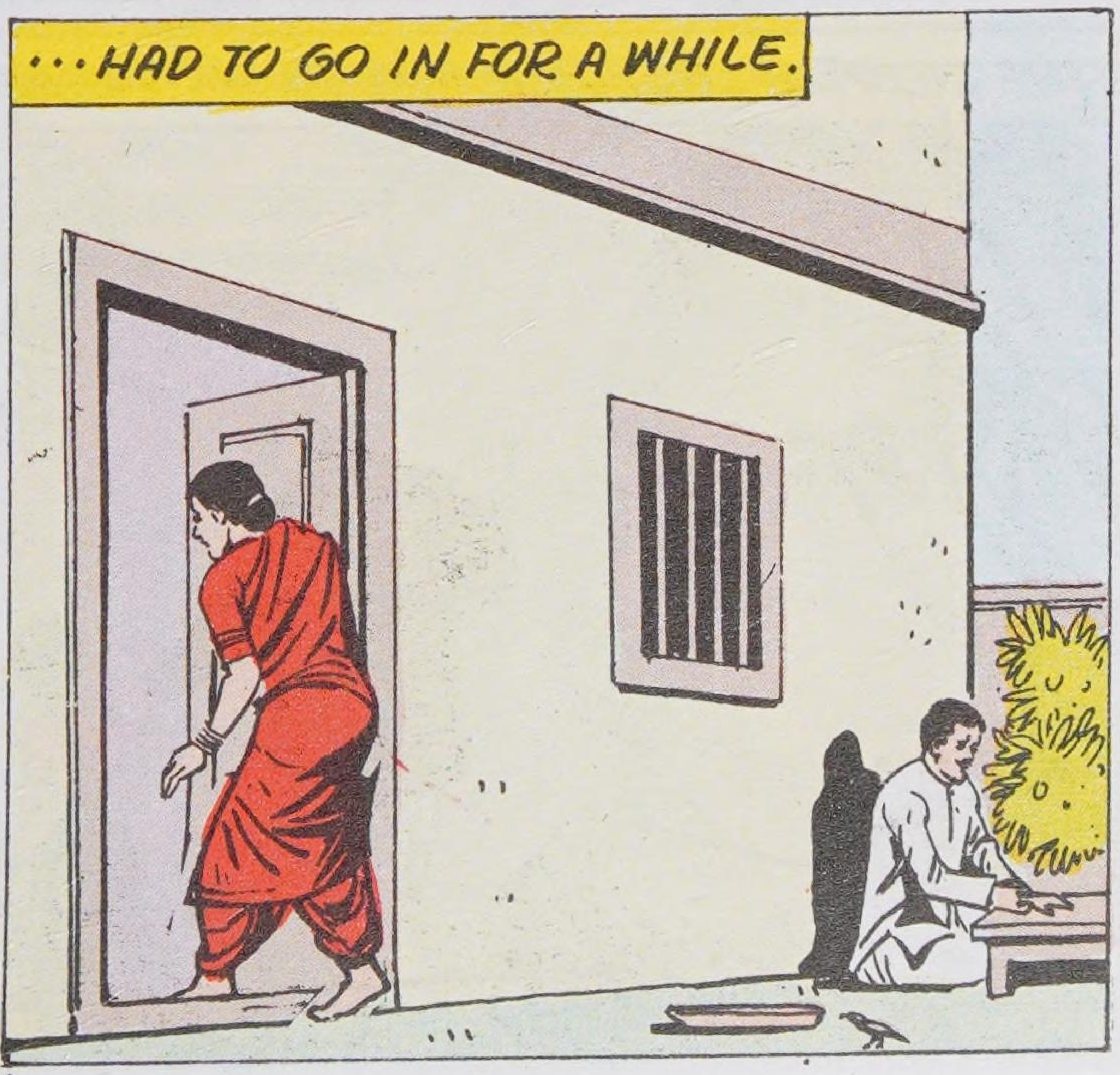

BUT DESPITE HIS POVERTY, HE WAS GENEROUS.
WHO'S THAT, THANGAM?
A RIKSHAWALLAH.


AH, YES! I HAD PROMISED HIM A SCARF.

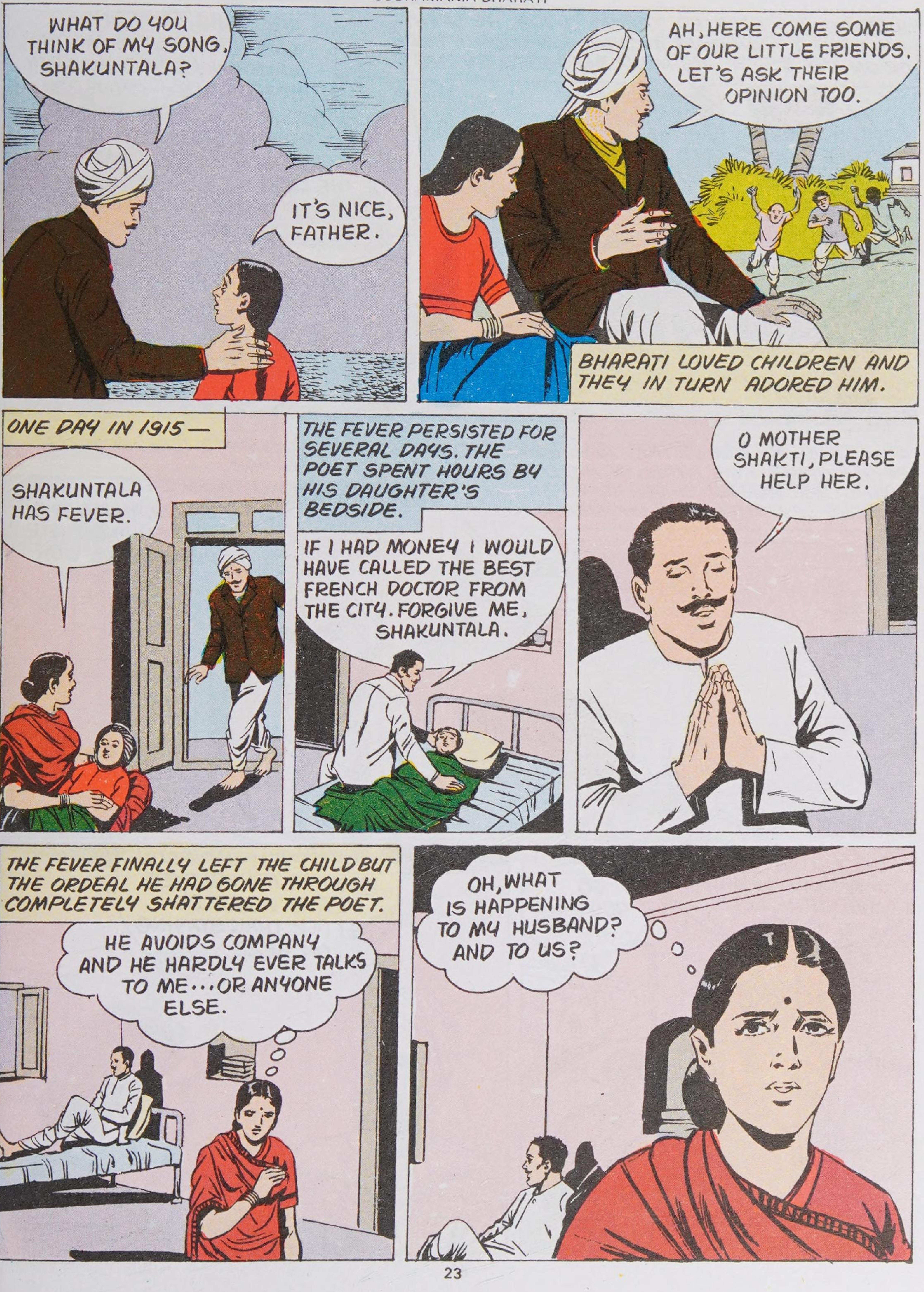

HERE YOU ARE.

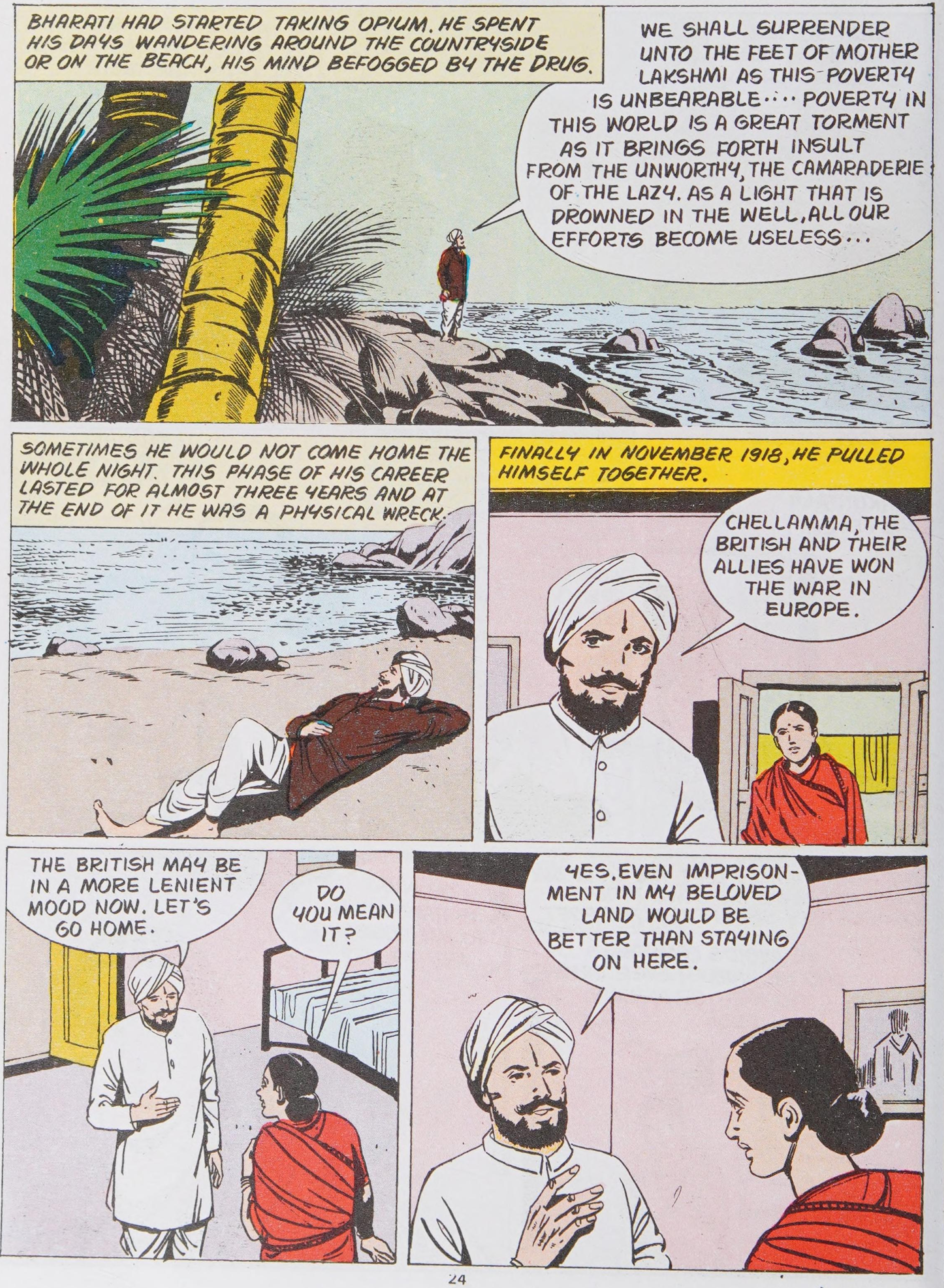

HOW COULD YOU DO THAT? WE OURSELVES HAVE NOTHING TO WEAR...
HE NEEDS IT MORE THAN WE DO, CHELLAMMA.

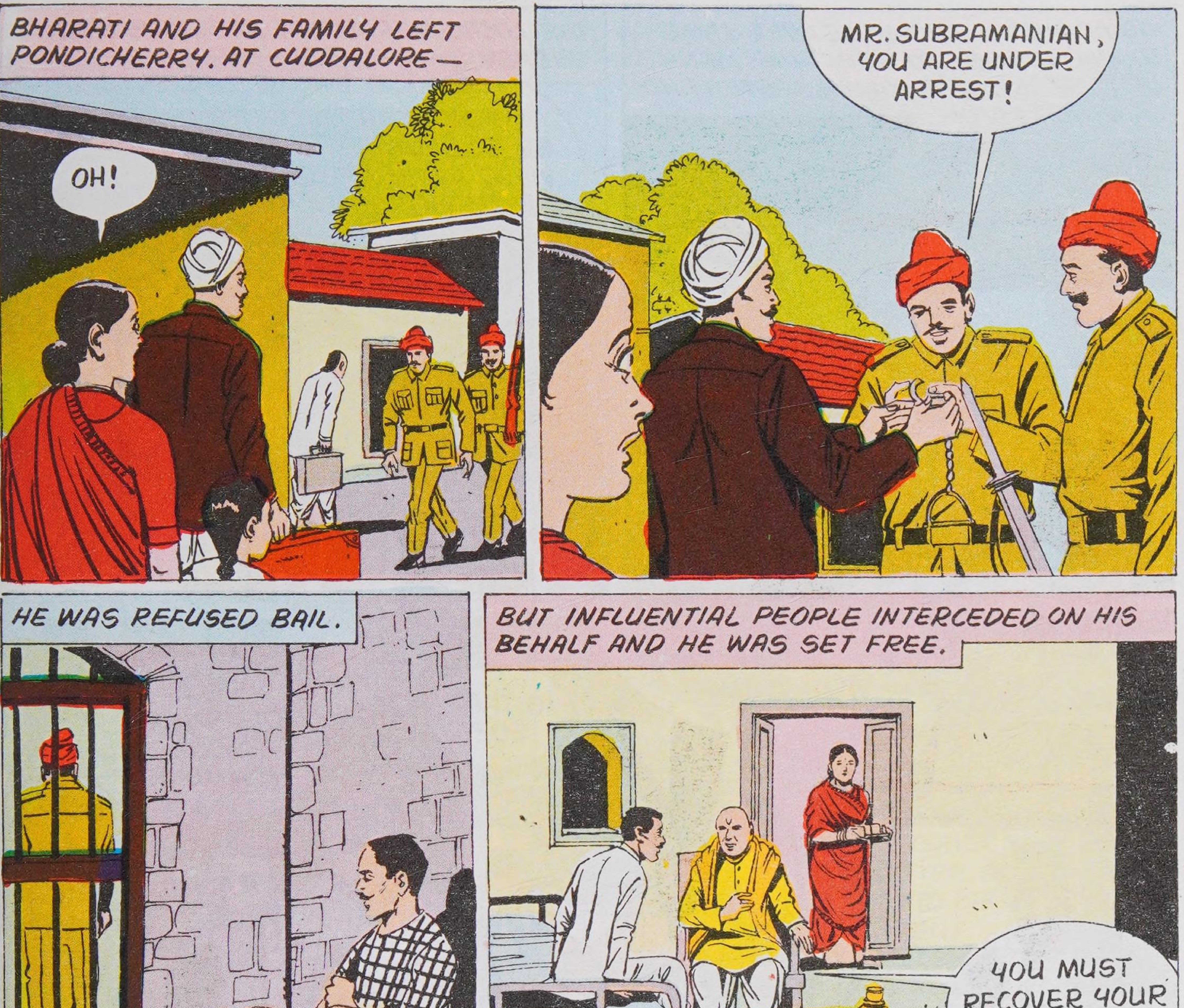

ONE DAY, BHARATI WAS SITTING IN THE BACKYARD AND TRYING TO WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR SWADESHAMITRAN. CHELLAMMA WHO WAS SITTING NEAR BY CLEANING RICE...

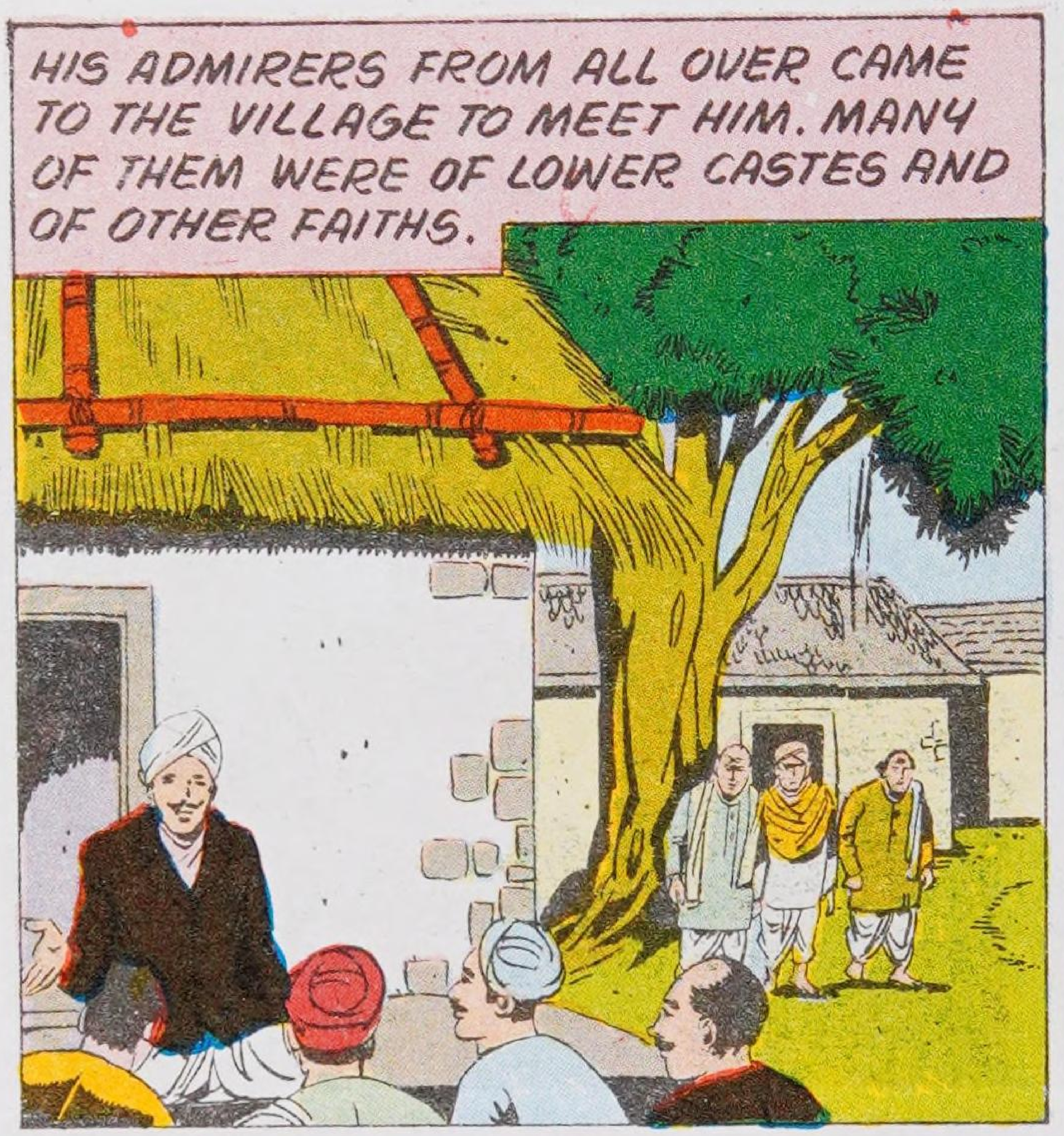

...HAD TO GO IN FOR A WHILE.

WHEN SHE RETURNED—
OH! HOW CAN YOU SIT SO CALMLY THERE AND WATCH THEM EAT THE RICE?
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE A SINGLE GRAIN! ··· OH!
AND OVERCOME WITH EMOTION CHELLAMMA BEGAN TO CRY.
BHARATI WAS STARTLED.
CHELLAMMA, PLEASE DON'T CRY.
LOOK AT THE SPARROWS. HOW HAPPY THEY ARE! WHY CAN'T WE TOO BE LIKE THEM?
THE INCIDENT INSPIRED HIM TO WRITE AN EXQUISITE LYRIC ON THE SPARROW.
O MAY YOU ESCAPE ALL SHACKLES AND TRAVEL IN FREEDOM LIKE THE SPRIGHTLY SPARROW···

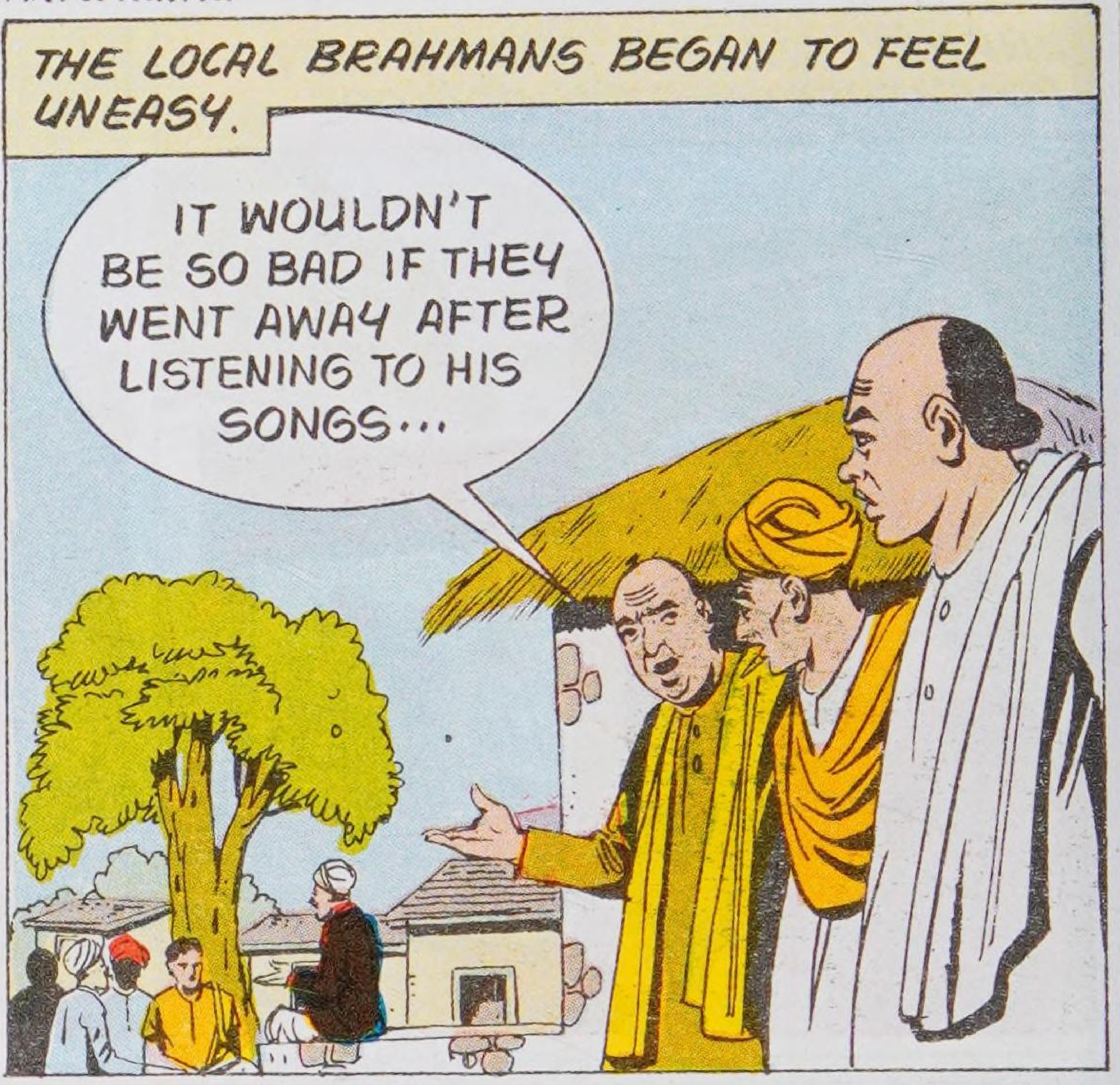

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY SONG, SHAKUNTALA?
IT'S NICE, FATHER.
AH, HERE COME SOME OF OUR LITTLE FRIENDS. LET'S ASK THEIR OPINION TOO.
BHARATI LOVED CHILDREN AND THEY IN TURN ADORED HIM.
ONE DAY IN 1915 —
SHAKUNTALA HAS FEVER.
THE FEVER PERSISTED FOR SEVERAL DAYS. THE POET SPENT HOURS BY HIS DAUGHTER'S BEDSIDE.
IF I HAD MONEY I WOULD HAVE CALLED THE BEST FRENCH DOCTOR FROM THE CITY. FORGIVE ME, SHAKUNTALA.
O MOTHER SHAKTI, PLEASE HELP HER.
THE FEVER FINALLY LEFT THE CHILD BUT THE ORDEAL HE HAD GONE THROUGH COMPLETELY SHATTERED THE POET.
HE AVOIDS COMPANY AND HE HARDLY EVER TALKS TO ME... OR ANYONE ELSE.
OH, WHAT IS HAPPENING TO MY HUSBAND? AND TO US?


BHARATI HAD STARTED TAKING OPIUM. HE SPENT HIS DAYS WANDERING AROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE OR ON THE BEACH, HIS MIND BEFOGGED BY THE DRUG.
WE SHALL SURRENDER UNTO THE FEET OF MOTHER LAKSHMI AS THIS POVERTY IS UNBEARABLE... POVERTY IN THIS WORLD IS A GREAT TORMENT AS IT BRINGS FORTH INSULT FROM THE UNWORTHY, THE CAMARADERIE OF THE LAZY. AS A LIGHT THAT IS DROWNED IN THE WELL, ALL OUR EFFORTS BECOME USELESS...
SOMETIMES HE WOULD NOT COME HOME THE WHOLE NIGHT. THIS PHASE OF HIS CAREER LASTED FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS AND AT THE END OF IT HE WAS A PHYSICAL WRECK.
FINALLY IN NOVEMBER 1918, HE PULLED HIMSELF TOGETHER.
CHELLAMMA, THE BRITISH AND THEIR ALLIES HAVE WON THE WAR IN EUROPE.
THE BRITISH MAY BE IN A MORE LENIENT MOOD NOW. LET'S GO HOME.
DO YOU MEAN IT?
YES. EVEN IMPRISONMENT IN MY BELOVED LAND WOULD BE BETTER THAN STAYING ON HERE.


BHARATI AND HIS FAMILY LEFT PONDICHERRY. AT CUDDALORE—
OH!
MR. SUBRAMANIAN, YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
HE WAS REFUSED BAIL.
BUT INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE INTERCEDED ON HIS BEHALF AND HE WAS SET FREE.
YOU MUST RECOVER YOUR HEALTH, BHARATI.
GO TO SOME QUIET PLACE.
BHARATI WENT TO KADAYAM AND SPENT THE NEXT TWO YEARS THERE.

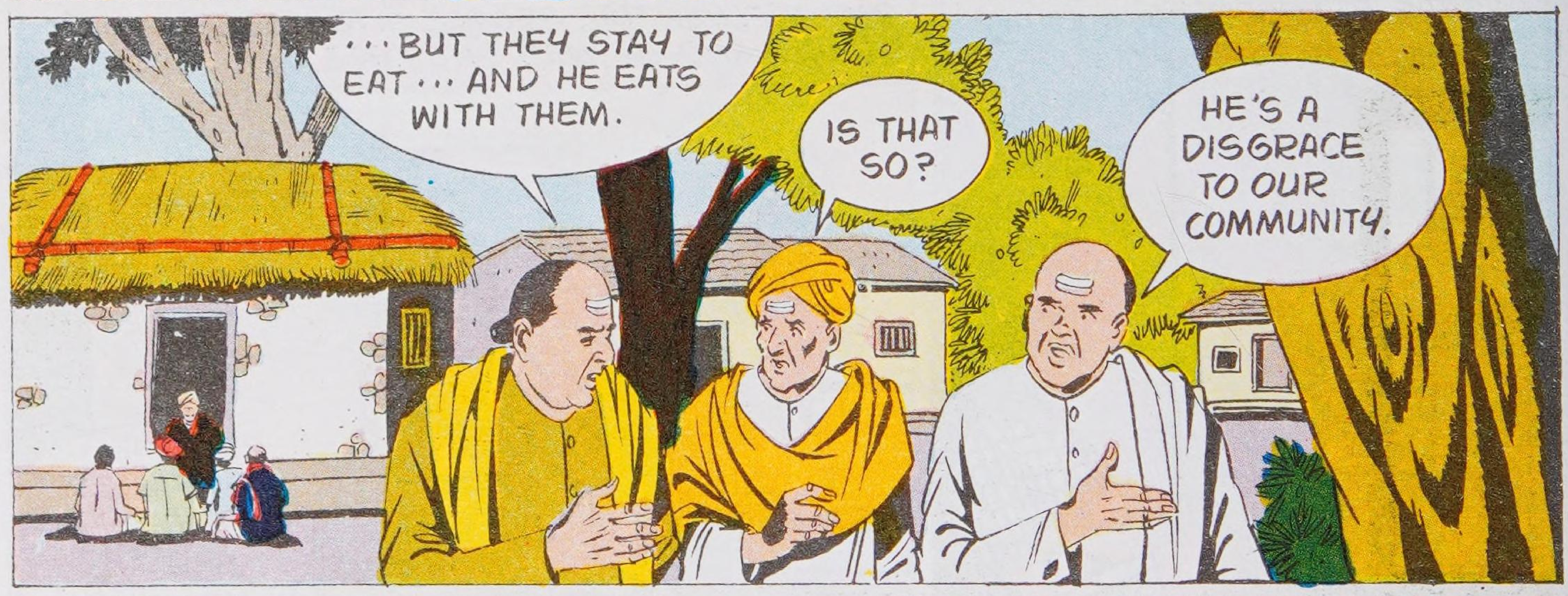


HIS ADMIRERS FROM ALL OVER CAME TO THE VILLAGE TO MEET HIM. MANY OF THEM WERE OF LOWER CASTES AND OF OTHER FAITHS.

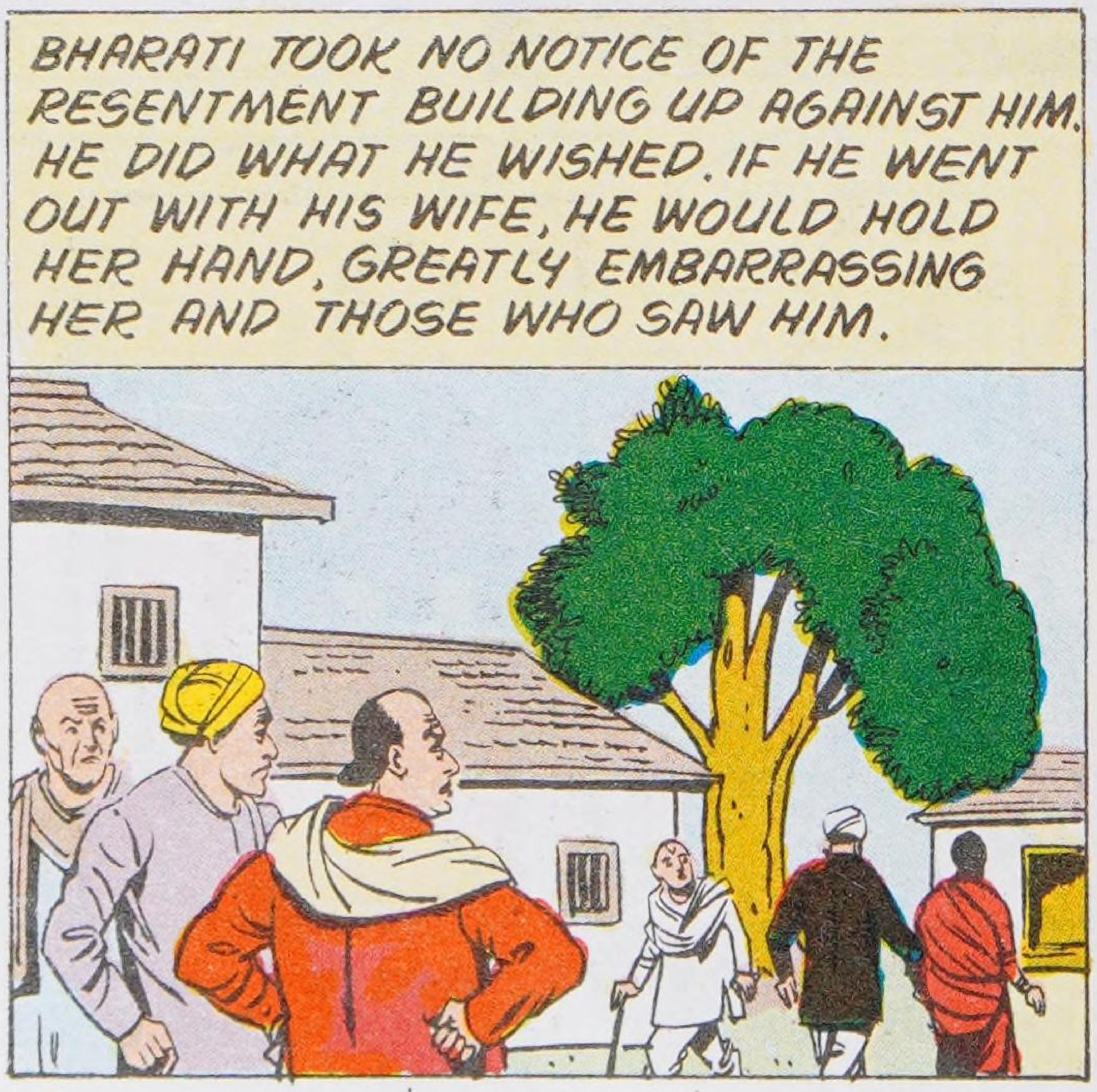


THE LOCAL BRAHMANS BEGAN TO FEEL UNEASY.

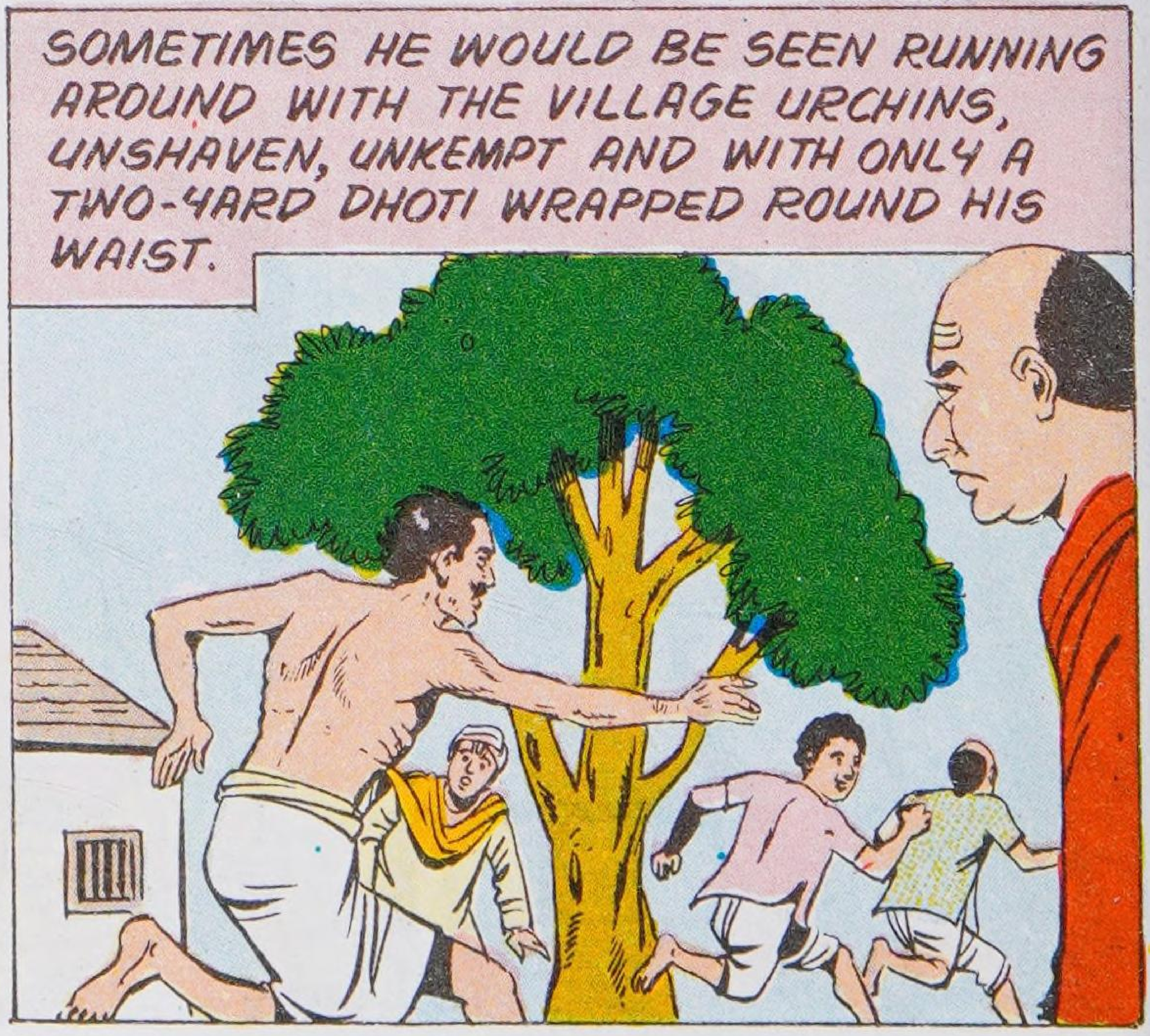
IT WOULDN'T BE SO BAD IF THEY WENT AWAY AFTER LISTENING TO HIS SONGS...



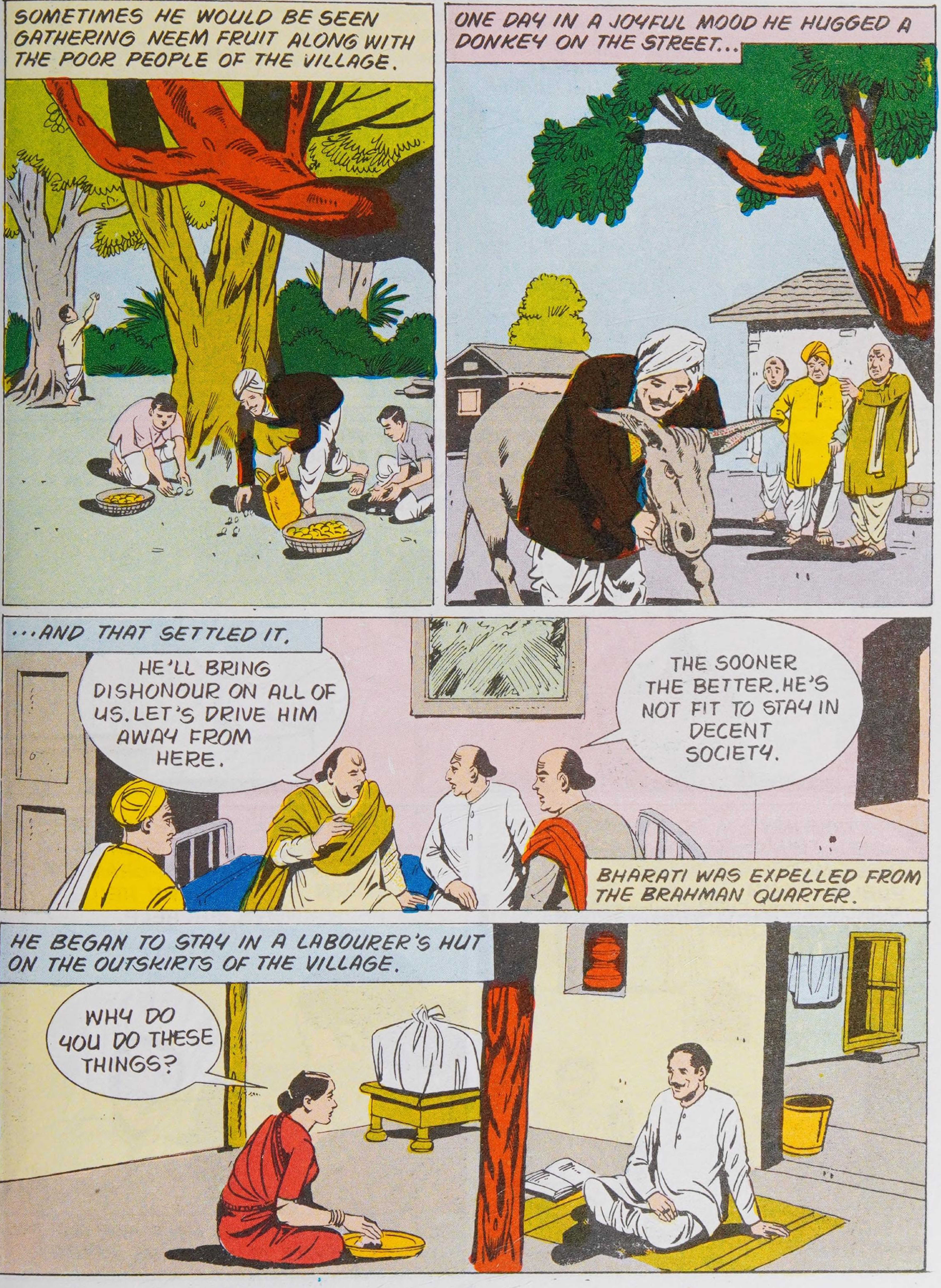
...BUT THEY STAY TO EAT... AND HE EATS WITH THEM.
IS THAT SO?
HE'S A DISGRACE TO OUR COMMUNITY.

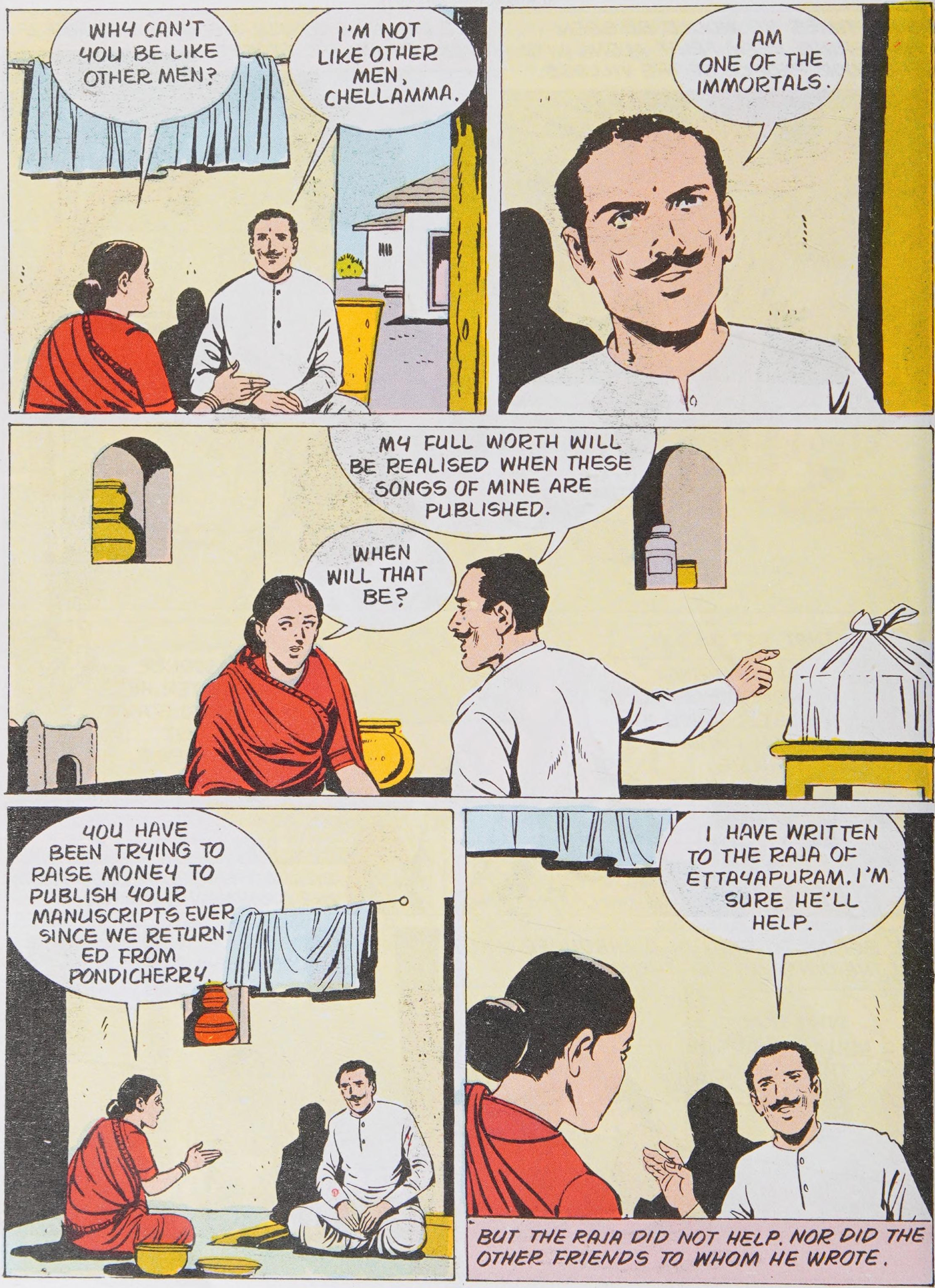


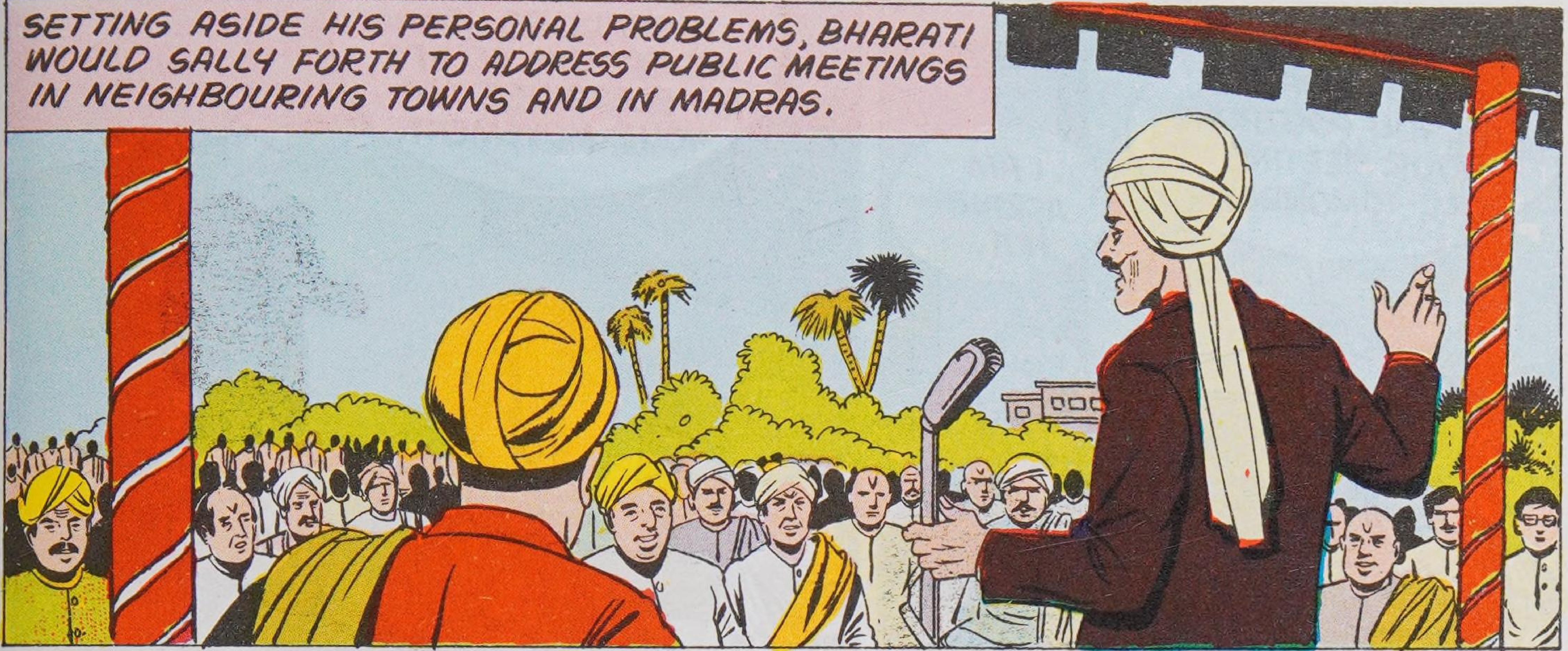
BHARATI TOOK NO NOTICE OF THE RESENTMENT BUILDING UP AGAINST HIM. HE DID WHAT HE WISHED. IF HE WENT OUT WITH HIS WIFE, HE WOULD HOLD HER HAND, GREATLY EMBARRASSING HER AND THOSE WHO SAW HIM.

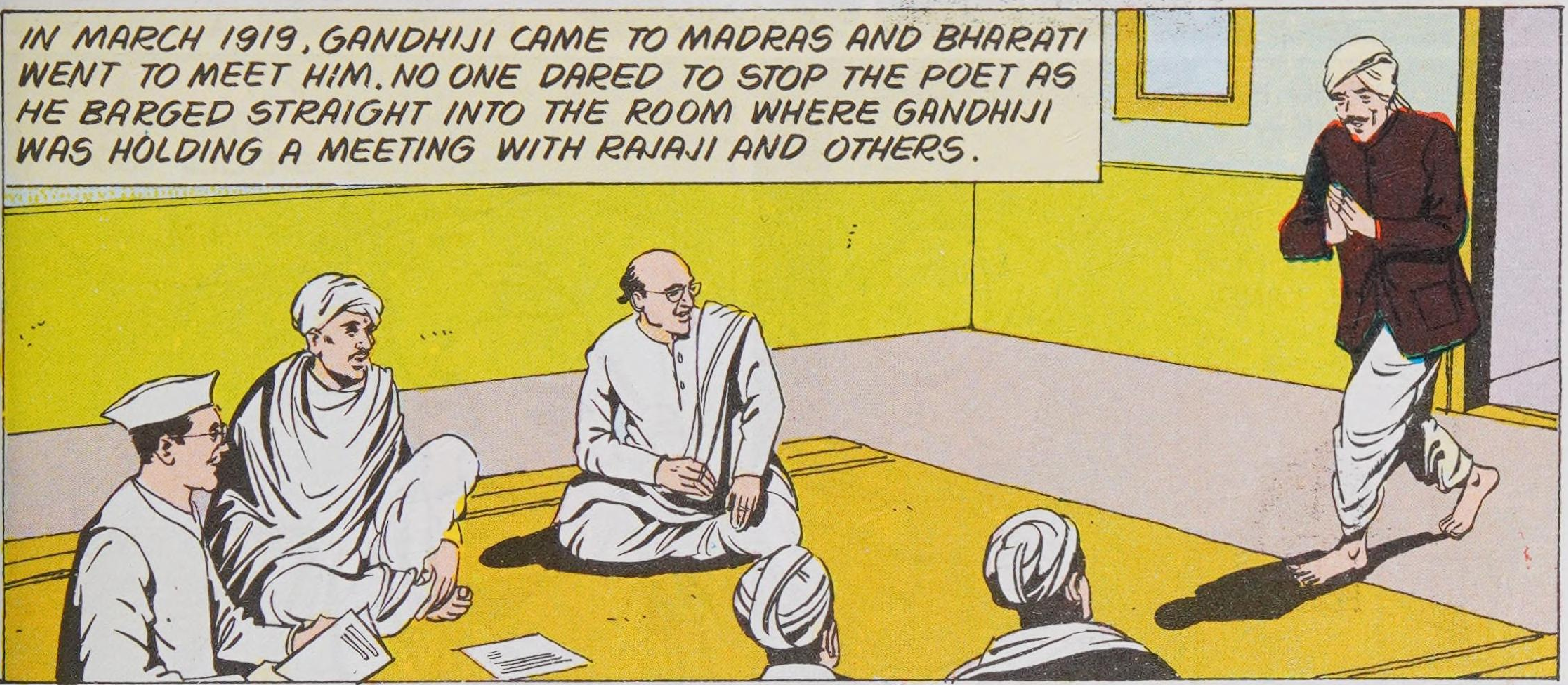


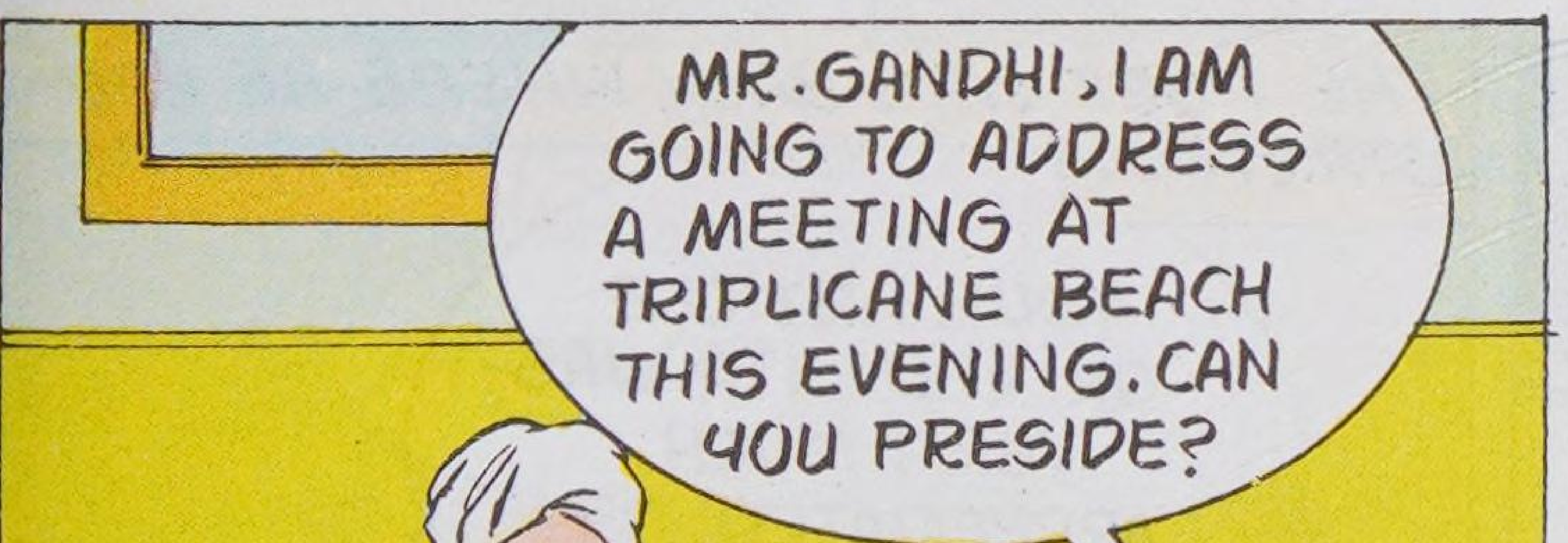
SOMETIMES HE WOULD BE SEEN RUNNING AROUND WITH THE VILLAGE URCHINS, UNSHAVEN, UNKEMPT AND WITH ONLY A TWO-YARD DHOTI WRAPPED ROUND HIS WAIST.

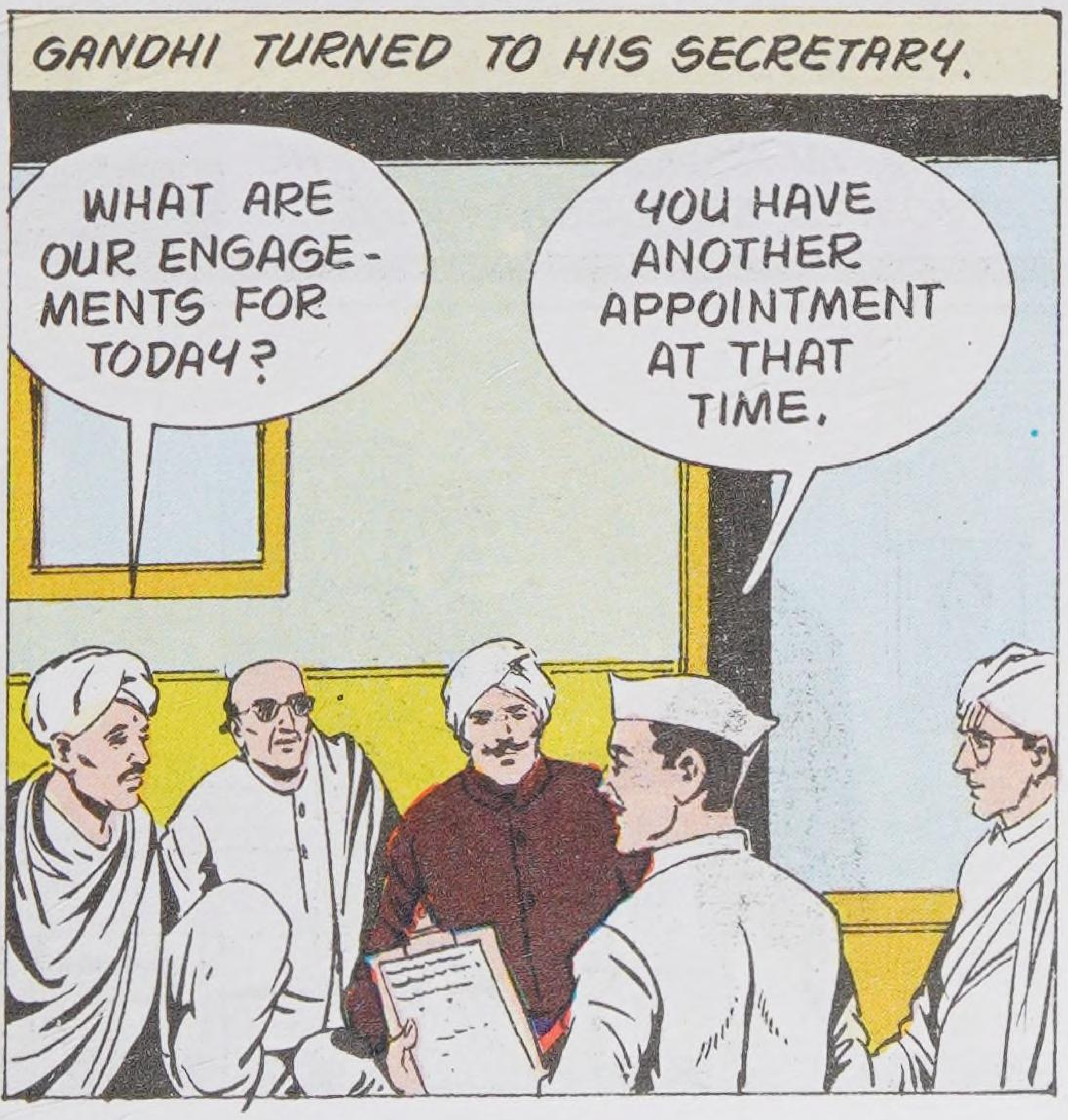

SOMETIMES HE WOULD BE SEEN GATHERING NEEM FRUIT ALONG WITH THE POOR PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE.
ONE DAY IN A JOYFUL MOOD HE HUGGED A DONKEY ON THE STREET...
...AND THAT SETTLED IT.
HE'LL BRING DISHONOUR ON ALL OF US. LET'S DRIVE HIM AWAY FROM HERE.
THE SOONER THE BETTER. HE'S NOT FIT TO STAY IN DECENT SOCIETY.
BHARATI WAS EXPELLED FROM THE BRAHMAN QUARTER.
HE BEGAN TO STAY IN A LABOURER'S HUT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE.
WHY DO YOU DO THESE THINGS?


WHY CAN'T YOU BE LIKE OTHER MEN?
I'M NOT LIKE OTHER MEN, CHELLAMMA.
I AM ONE OF THE IMMORTALS.
MY FULL WORTH WILL BE REALISED WHEN THESE SONGS OF MINE ARE PUBLISHED.
WHEN WILL THAT BE?
YOU HAVE BEEN TRYING TO RAISE MONEY TO PUBLISH YOUR MANUSCRIPTS EVER SINCE WE RETURNED FROM PONDICHERRY.
I HAVE WRITTEN TO THE RAJA OF ETTAYAPURAM. I'M SURE HE'LL HELP.
BUT THE RAJA DID NOT HELP. NOR DID THE OTHER FRIENDS TO WHOM HE WROTE.

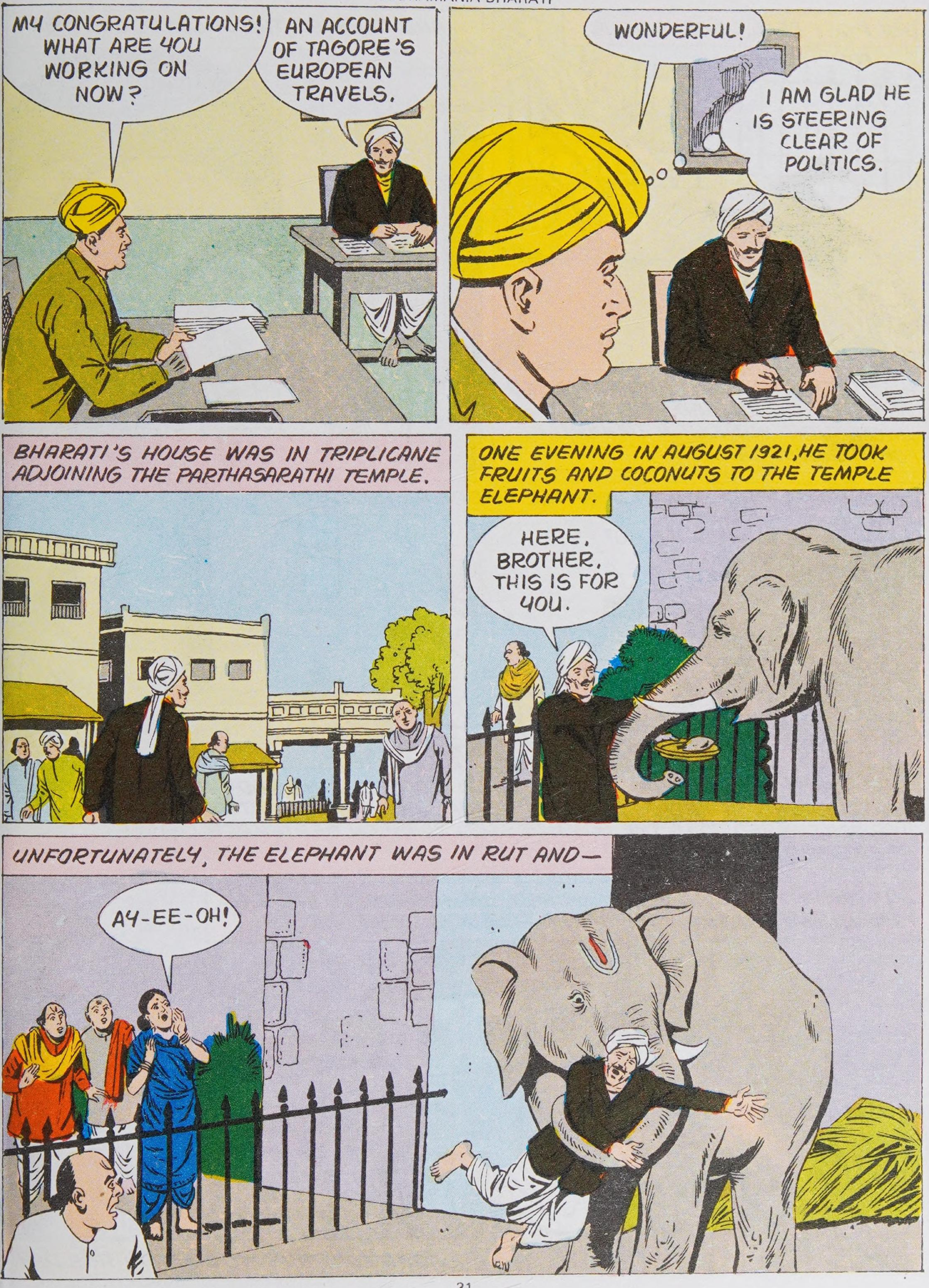

SETTING ASIDE HIS PERSONAL PROBLEMS, BHARATI WOULD SALLY FORTH TO ADDRESS PUBLIC MEETINGS IN NEIGHBOURING TOWNS AND IN MADRAS.

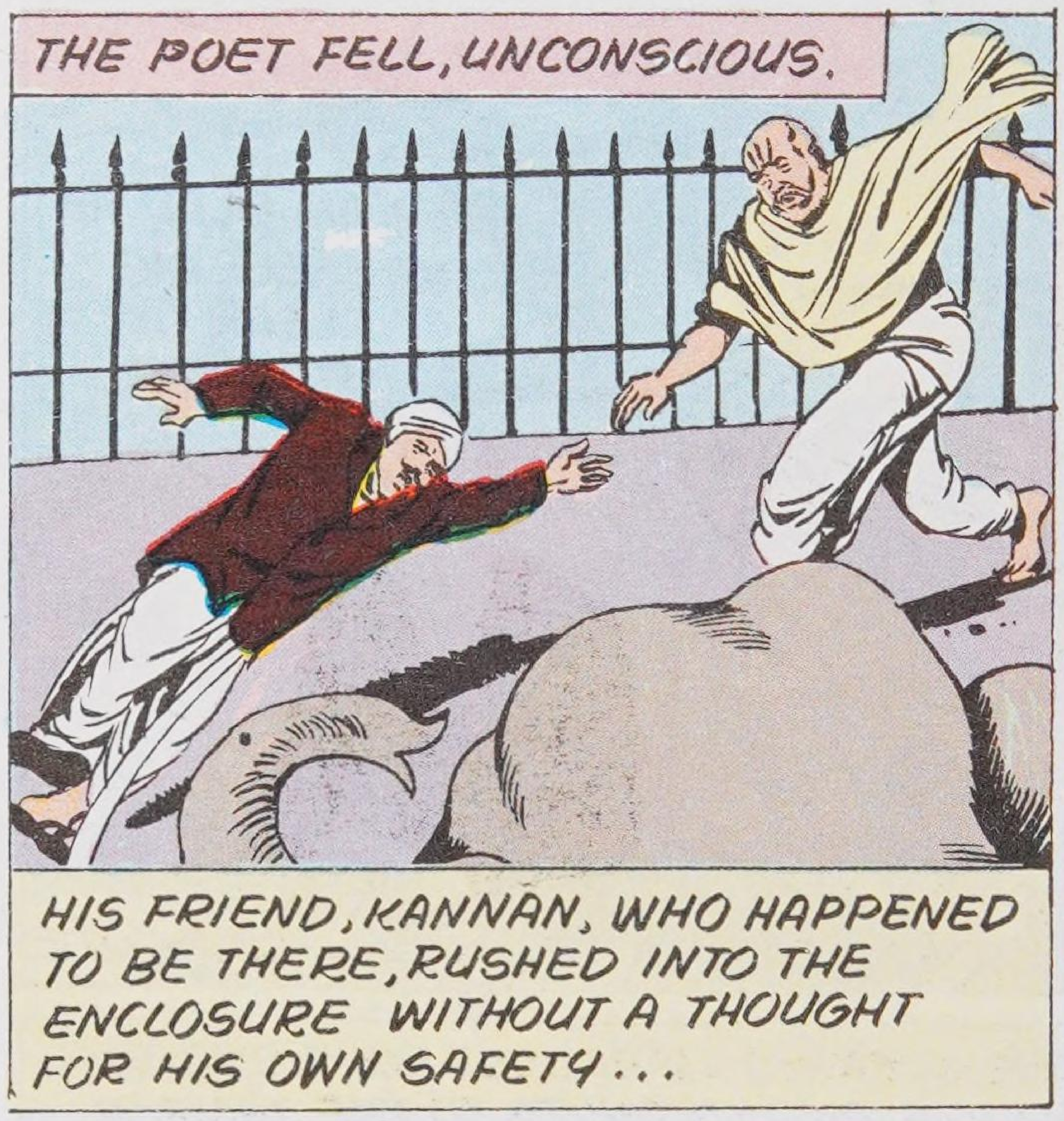

IN MARCH 1919, GANDHIJI CAME TO MADRAS AND BHARATI WENT TO MEET HIM. NO ONE DARED TO STOP THE POET AS HE BARGED STRAIGHT INTO THE ROOM WHERE GANDHIJI WAS HOLDING A MEETING WITH RAJAJI AND OTHERS.

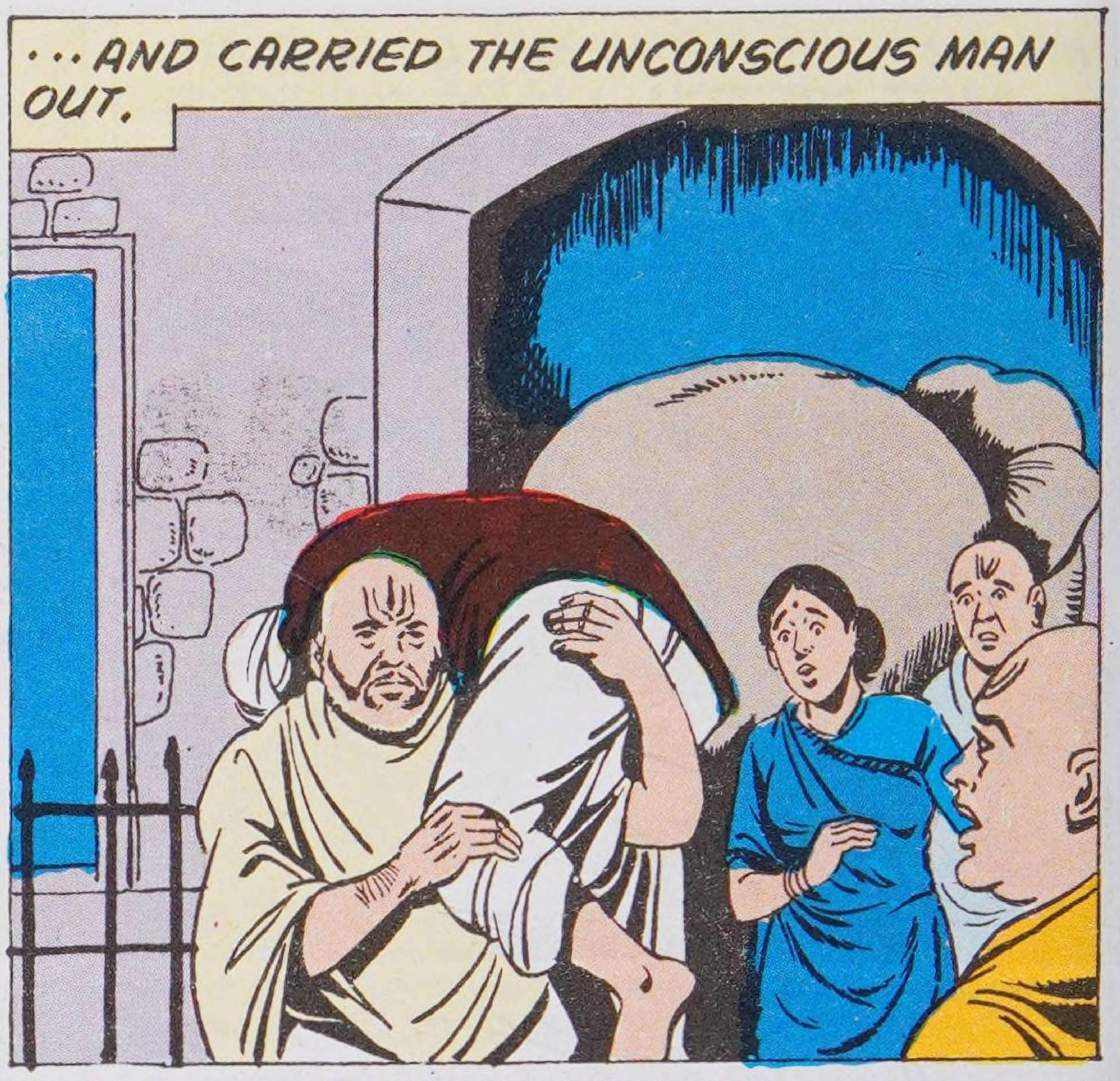

MR. GANDHI, I AM GOING TO ADDRESS A MEETING AT TRIPLICANE BEACH THIS EVENING. CAN YOU PRESIDE?

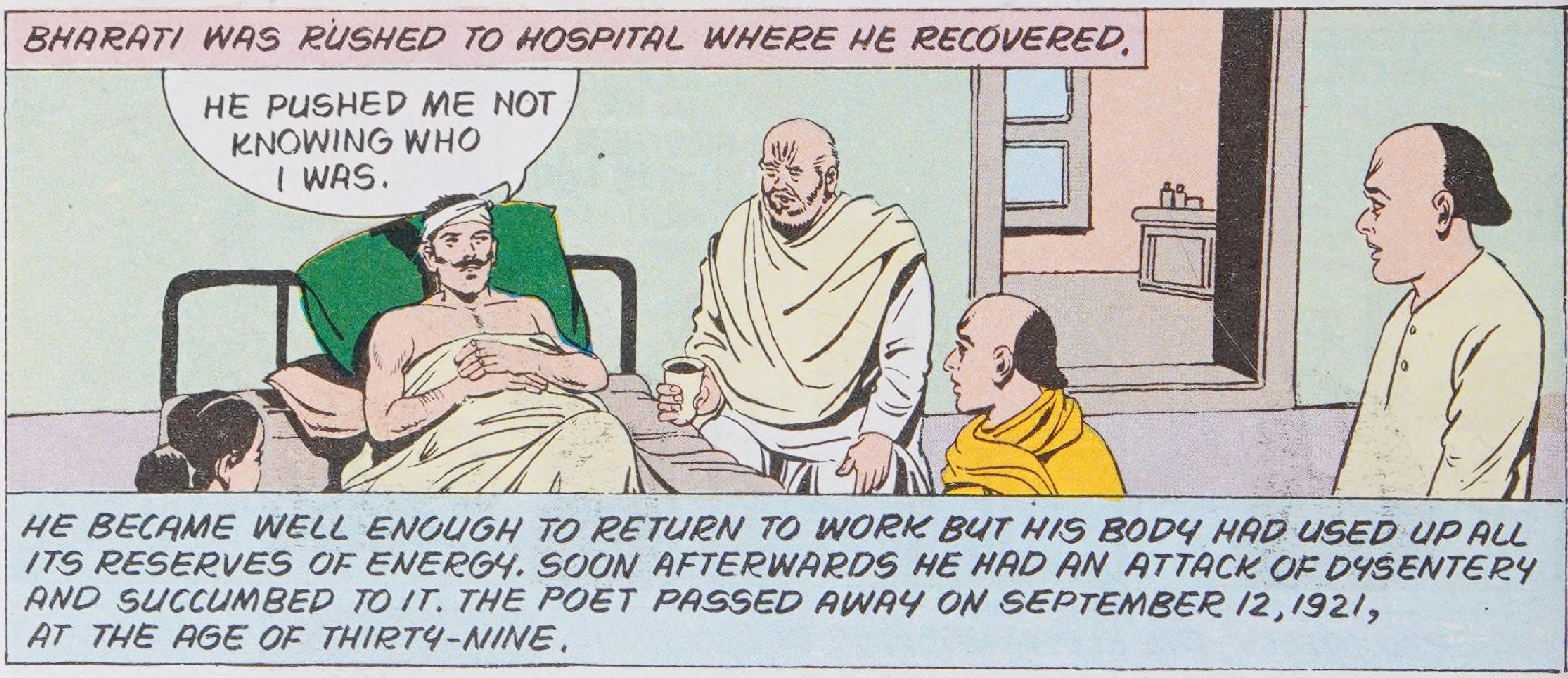

GANDHI TURNED TO HIS SECRETARY.
WHAT ARE OUR ENGAGEMENTS FOR TODAY?
YOU HAVE ANOTHER APPOINTMENT AT THAT TIME.

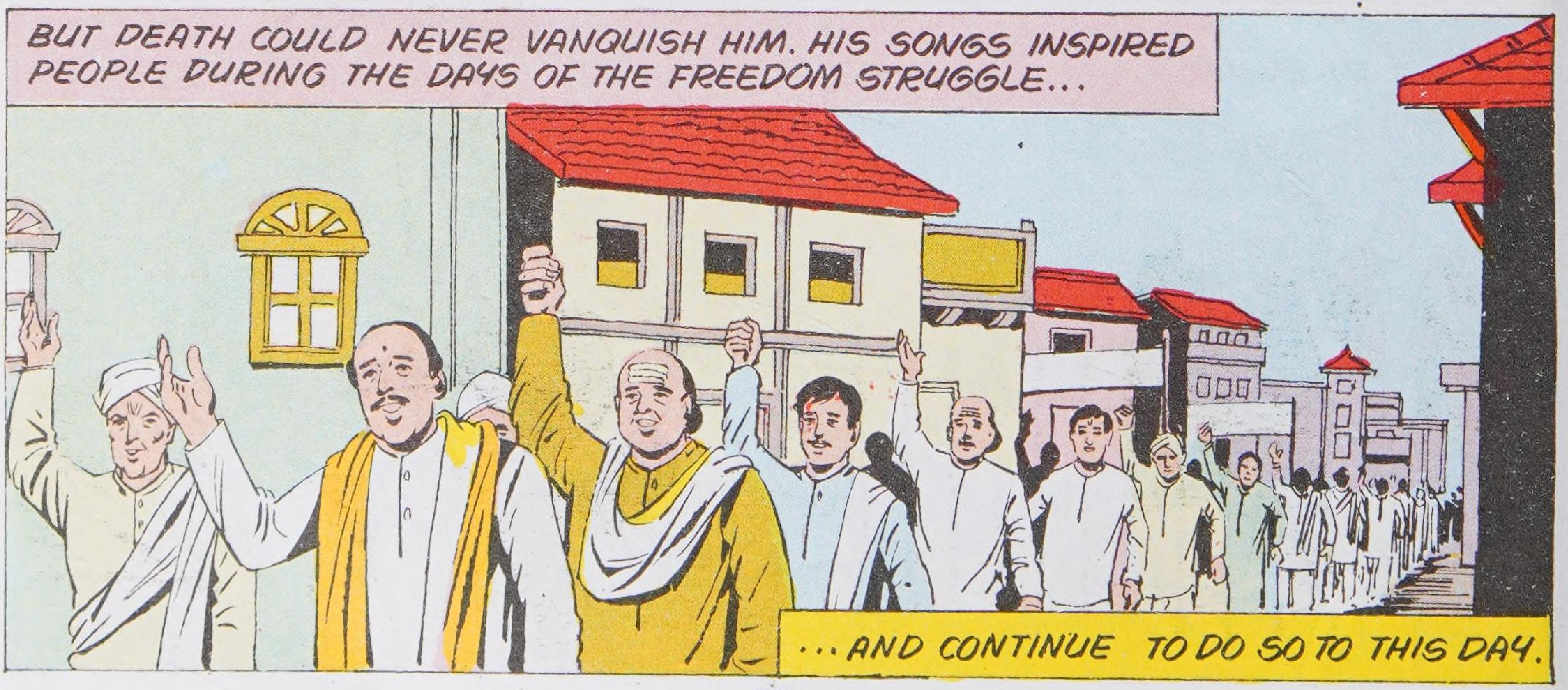
I CANNOT COME TODAY. CAN YOU POSTPONE YOUR MEETING TILL TOMORROW?
I AM AFRAID NOT.
I SHALL GO NOW, MR. GANDHI. ACCEPT MY BLESSINGS FOR YOUR MOVEMENT.
WHO IS HE?
HE IS THE POET OF OUR TAMIL LAND.
SOMEBODY SHOULD LOOK AFTER HIM.
THE NECESSITY OF MAKING A LIVING FORCED BHARATI TO TAKE UP A JOB AGAIN. IN NOVEMBER 1920, HE REJOINED SWADESHAMITRAN.
THE POET WAS BACK WHERE HE HAD STARTED.
YOUR ARTICLE ON VEDANTA WAS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED BY OUR READERS, BHARATI.


MY CONGRATULATIONS! WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?
AN ACCOUNT OF TAGORE'S EUROPEAN TRAVELS.
WONDERFUL!
I AM GLAD HE IS STEERING CLEAR OF POLITICS.
BHARATI'S HOUSE WAS IN TRIPLICANE ADJOINING THE PARTHASARATHI TEMPLE.
ONE EVENING IN AUGUST 1921, HE TOOK FRUITS AND COCONUTS TO THE TEMPLE ELEPHANT.
HERE, BROTHER, THIS IS FOR YOU.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE ELEPHANT WAS IN RUT AND—
AY-EE-OH!


THE POET FELL, UNCONSCIOUS.
HIS FRIEND, KANNAN, WHO HAPPENED TO BE THERE, RUSHED INTO THE ENCLOSURE WITHOUT A THOUGHT FOR HIS OWN SAFETY...


...AND CARRIED THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN OUT.


BHARATI WAS RUSHED TO HOSPITAL WHERE HE RECOVERED.
HE PUSHED ME NOT KNOWING WHO I WAS.
HE BECAME WELL ENOUGH TO RETURN TO WORK BUT HIS BODY HAD USED UP ALL ITS RESERVES OF ENERGY. SOON AFTERWARDS HE HAD AN ATTACK OF DYSENTERY AND SUCCUMBED TO IT. THE POET PASSED AWAY ON SEPTEMBER 12, 1921, AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-NINE.


BUT DEATH COULD NEVER VANQUISH HIM. HIS SONGS INSPIRED PEOPLE DURING THE DAYS OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE...
...AND CONTINUE TO DO SO TO THIS DAY.

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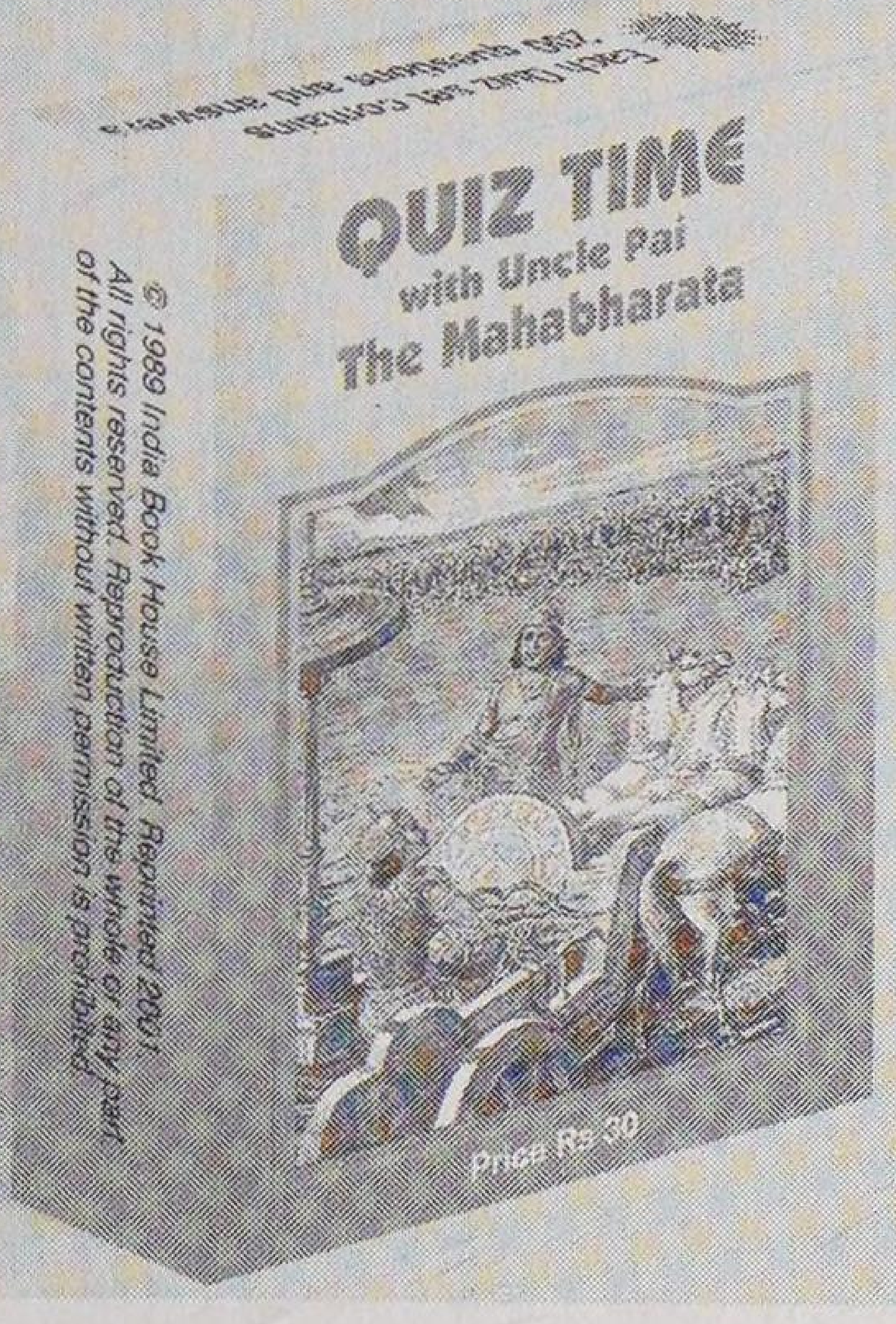

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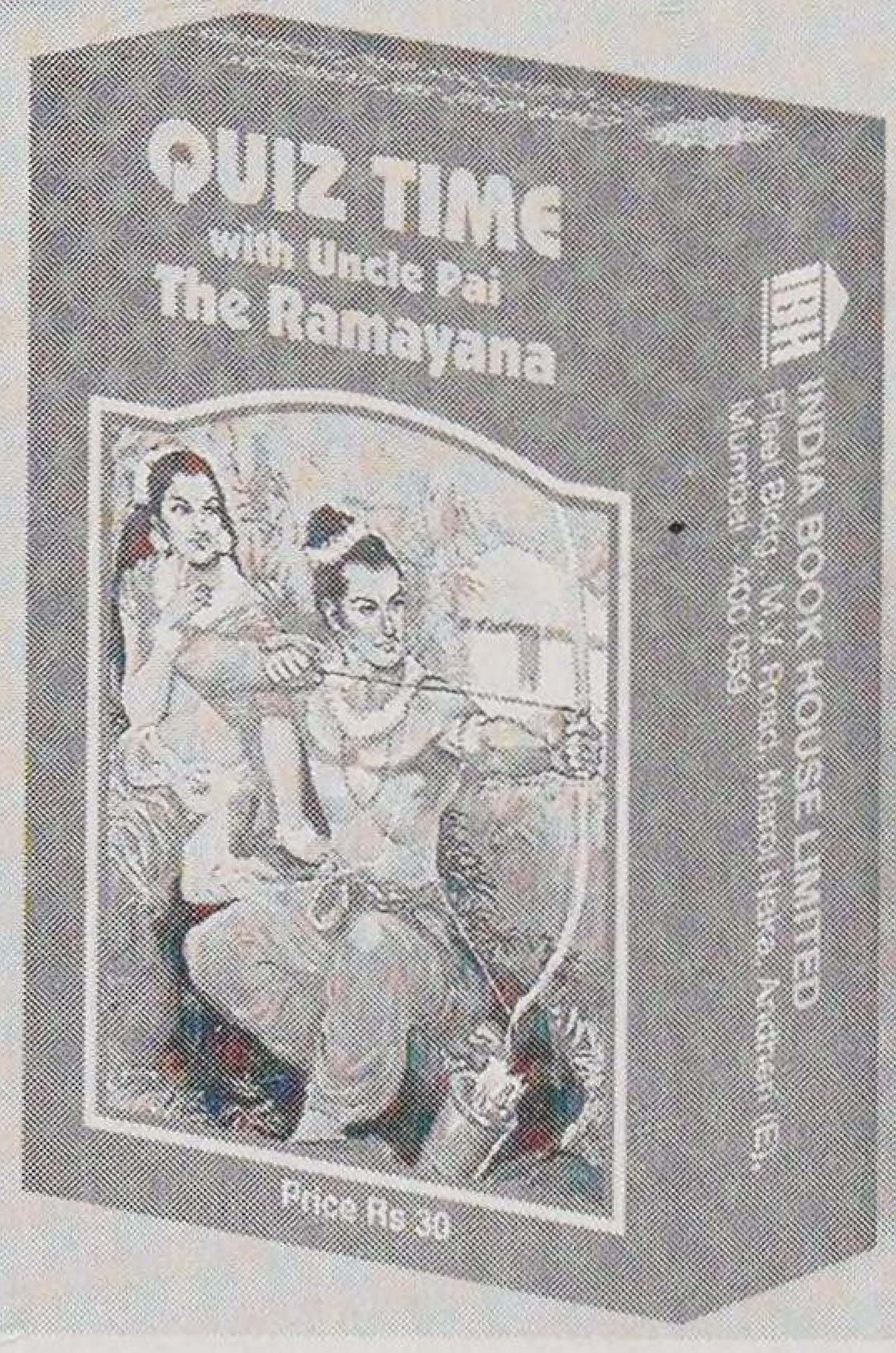

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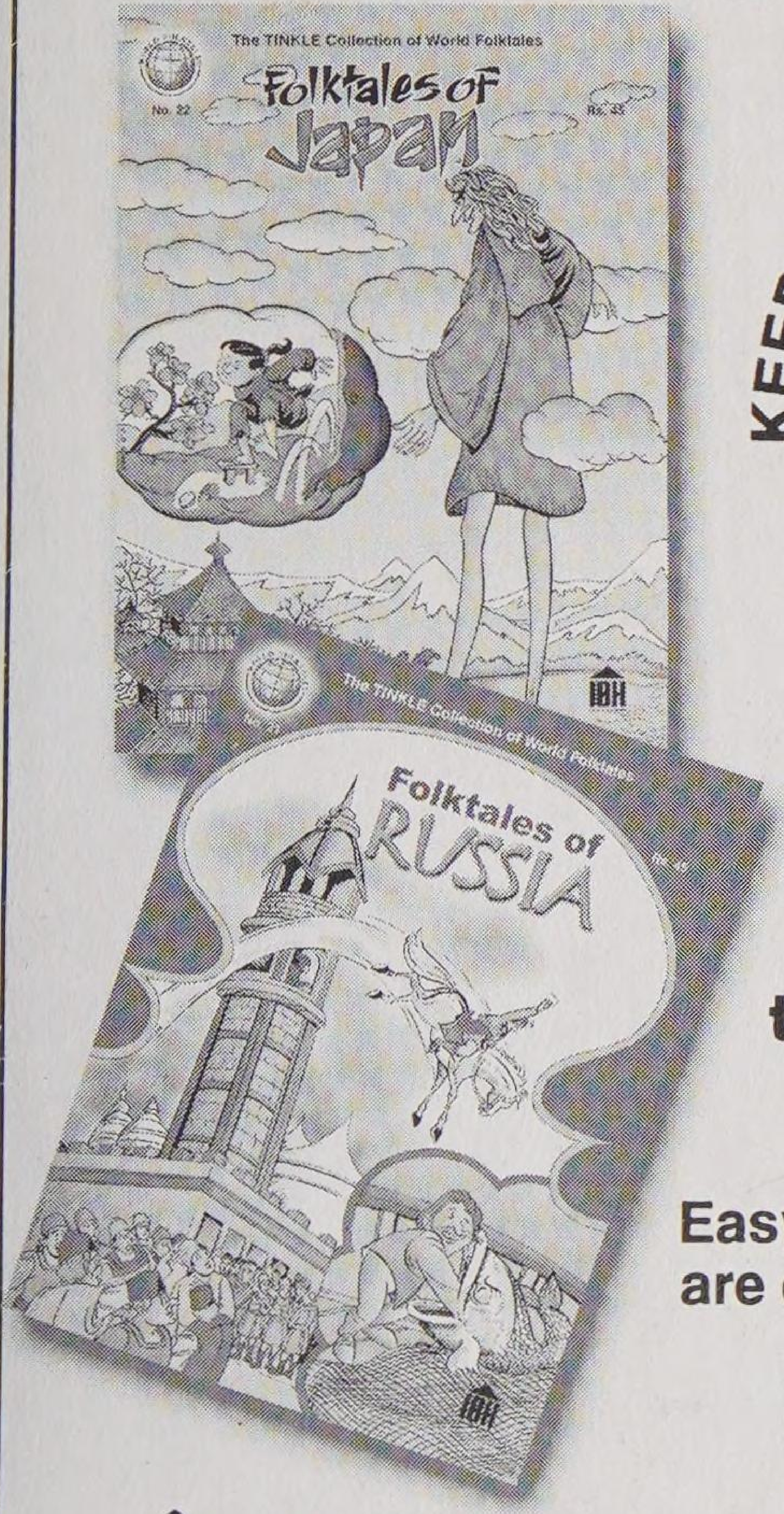

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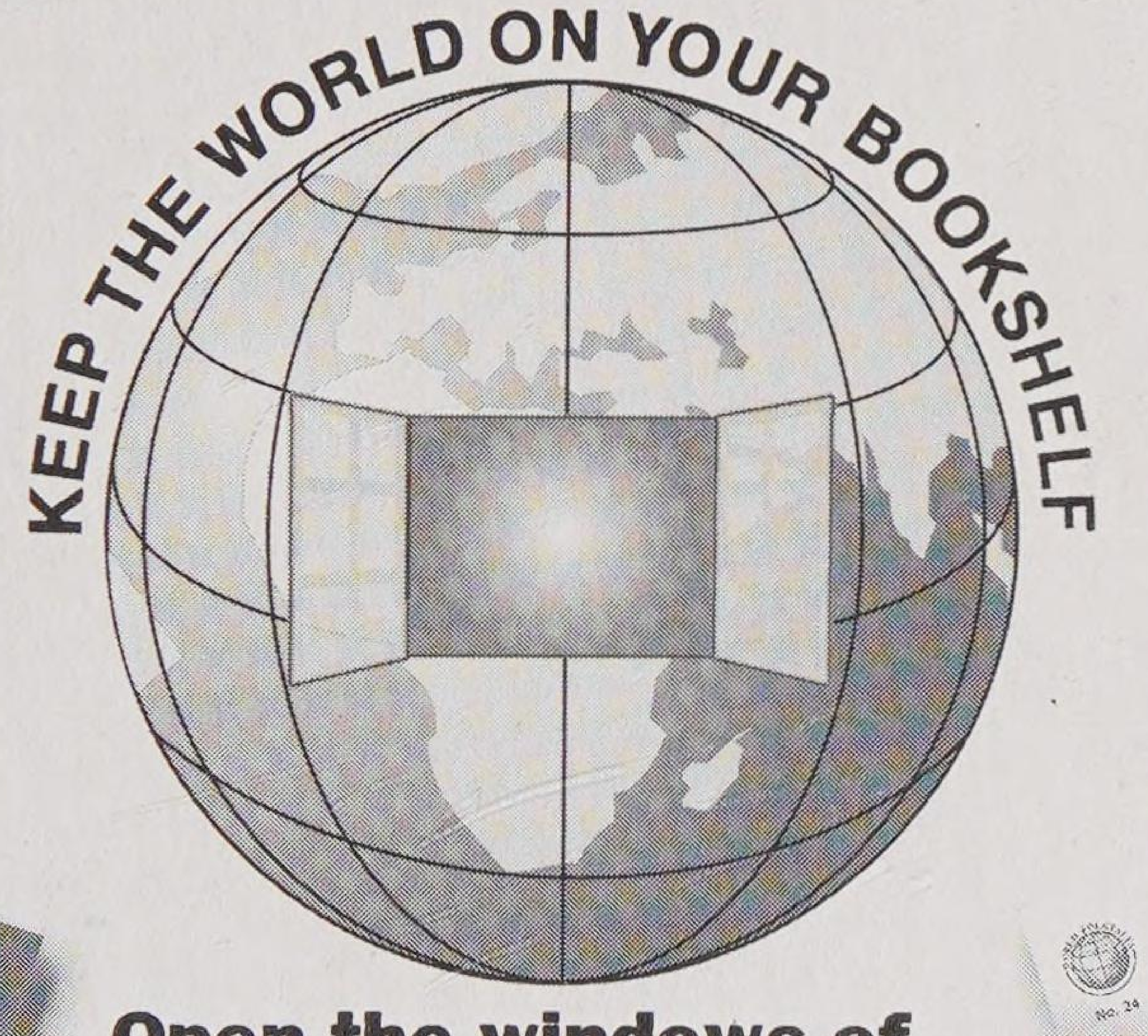

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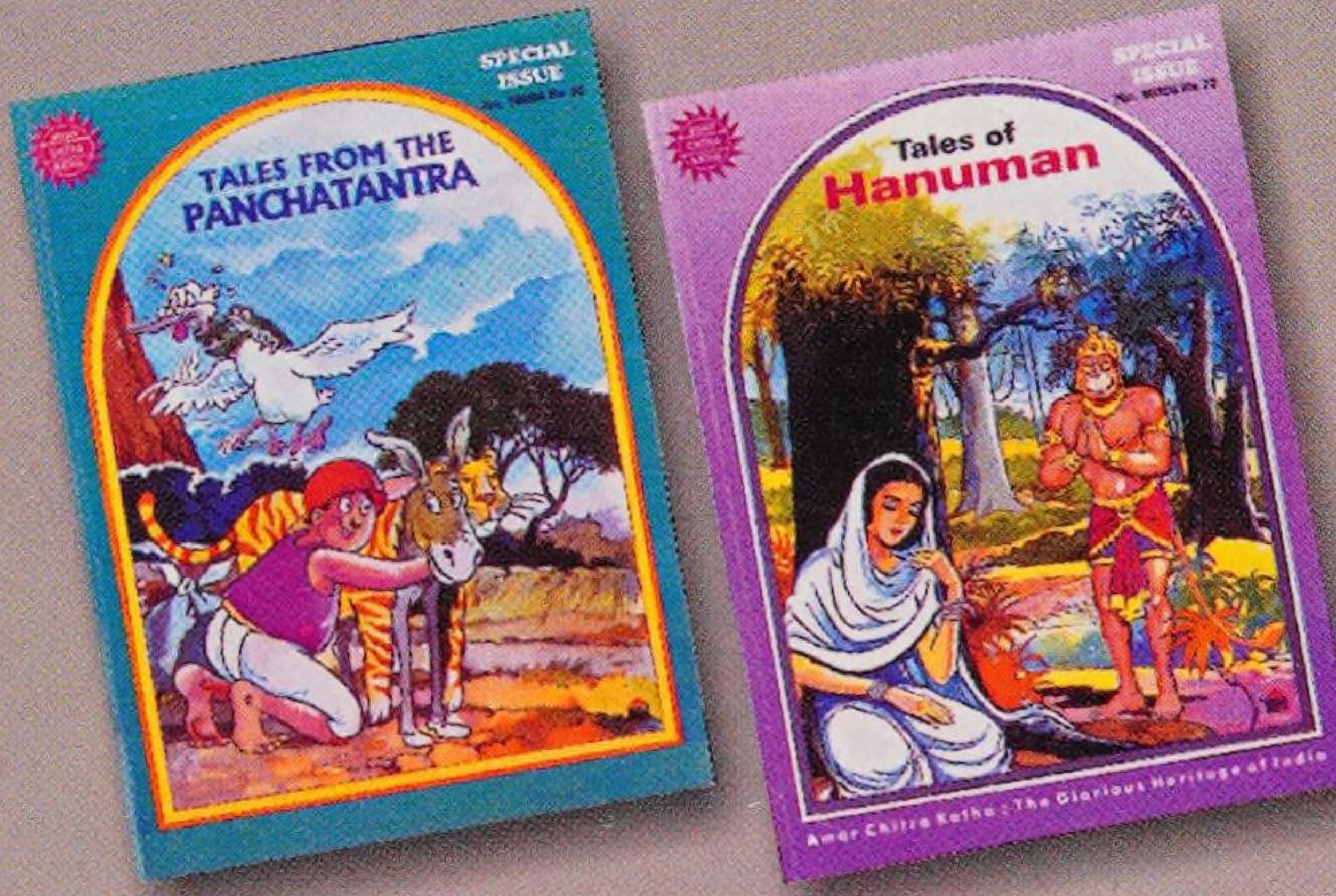
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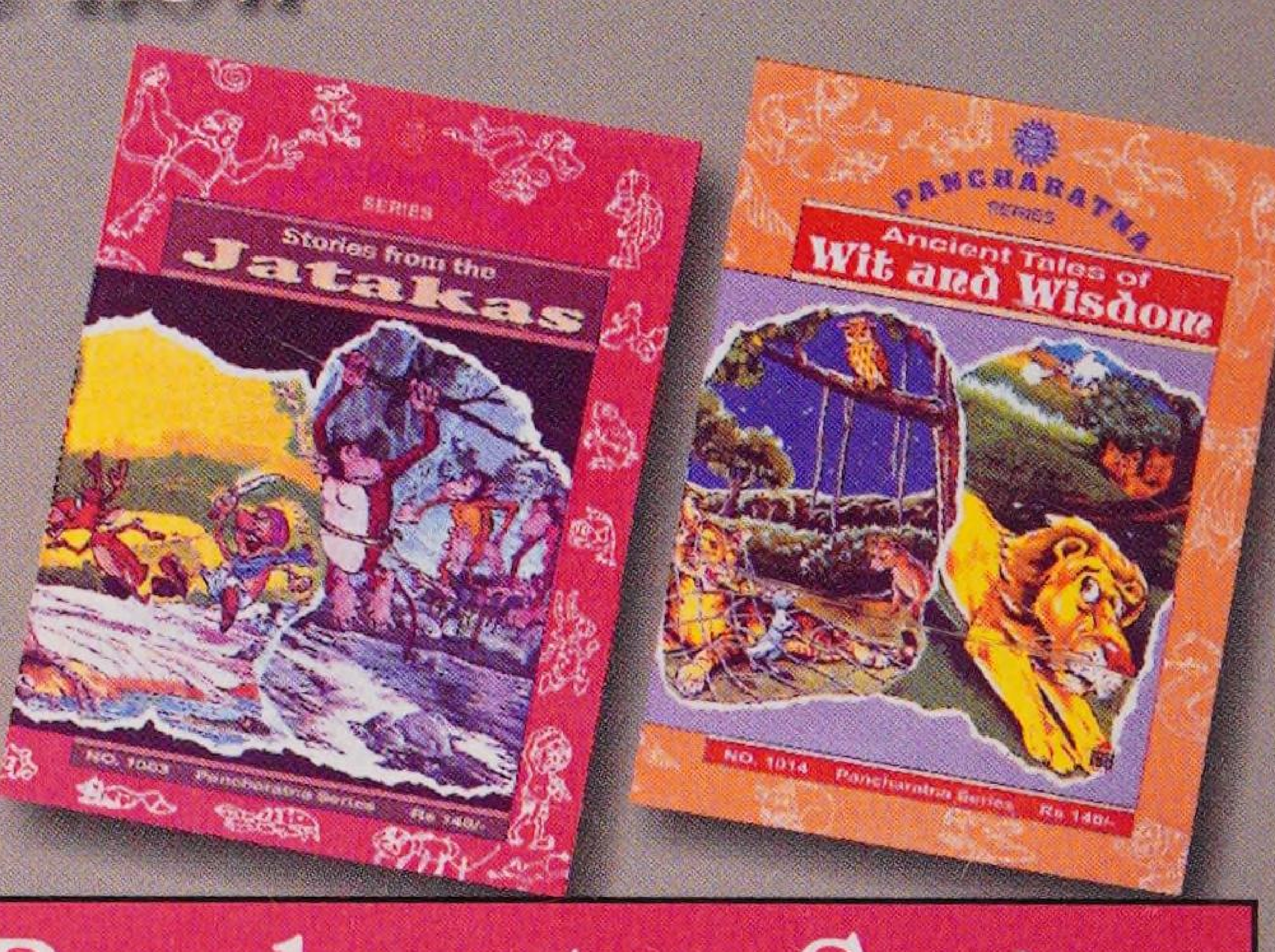
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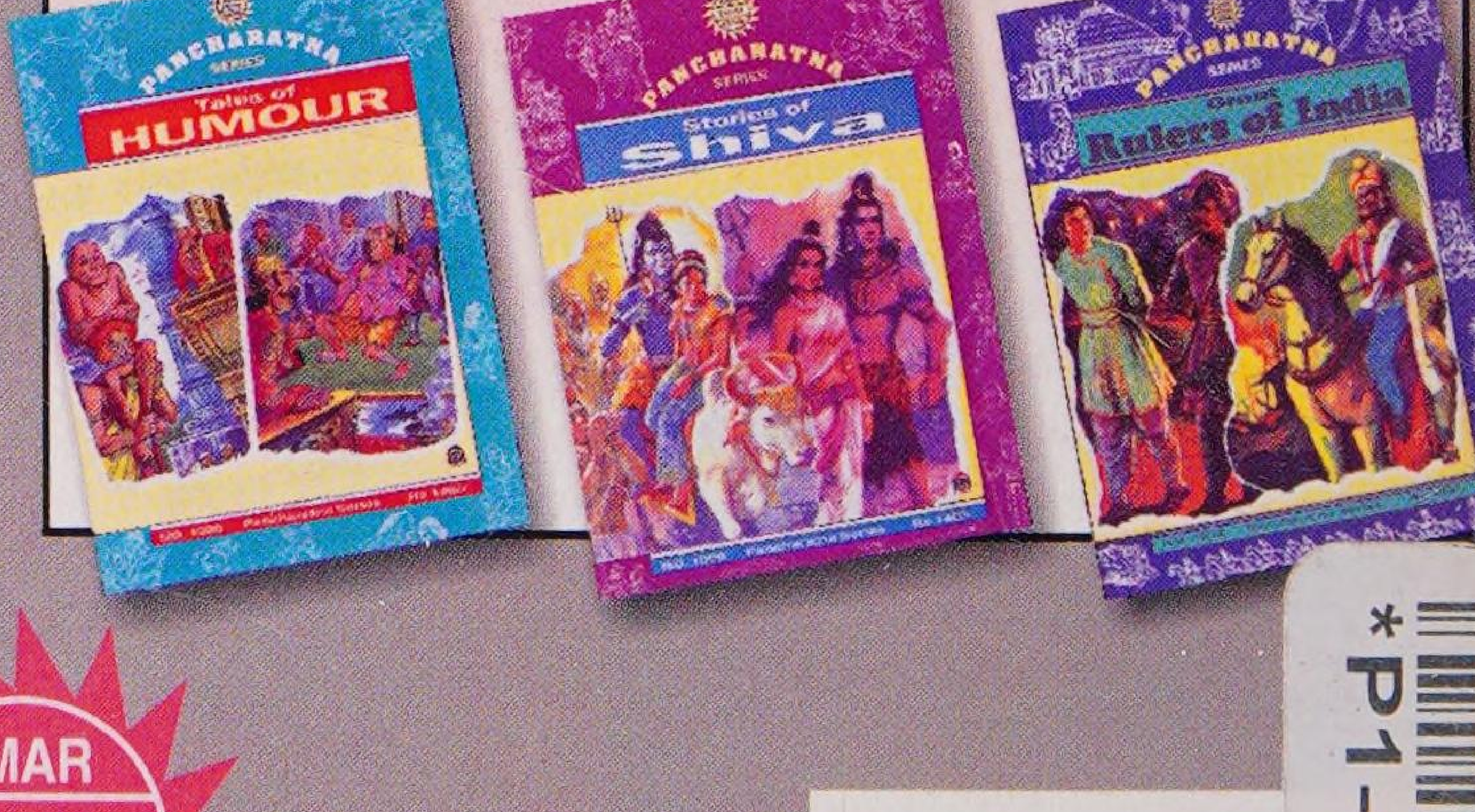
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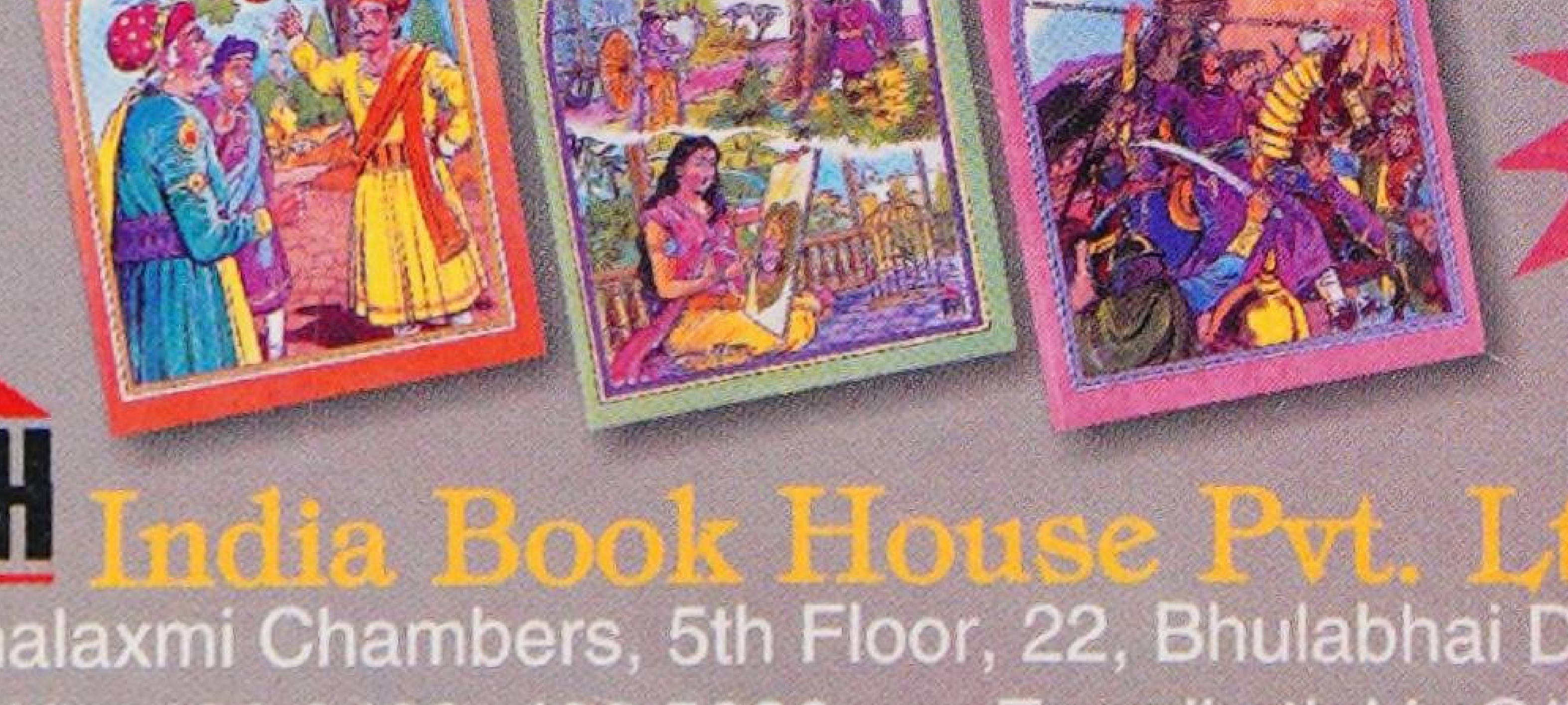
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